SEMA

Joey Bargsten

SEMA: Rumi's Dance (1987) for solo piano, by Joey Bargsten. Digital scan (2008) of original manuscript, assembled in Adobe InDesign. Title page, dedications, program note and afterword typeset digitally, based on manuscript.

More material by the composer is available at: http://www.badmindtime.com

Dedications

The following people have my deepest gratitude: SEMA is dedicated to them:

Joseph Waters and the Network for New Music, Philadelphia, for their energetic advocacy of the cause,

John White, for his commitment to excellence in the performance of this demanding work,

Barbara Kolb, for her support and friendship, and

Cheryl Bargsten-Yates, for introducing me to Rumi long before he became fashionable.

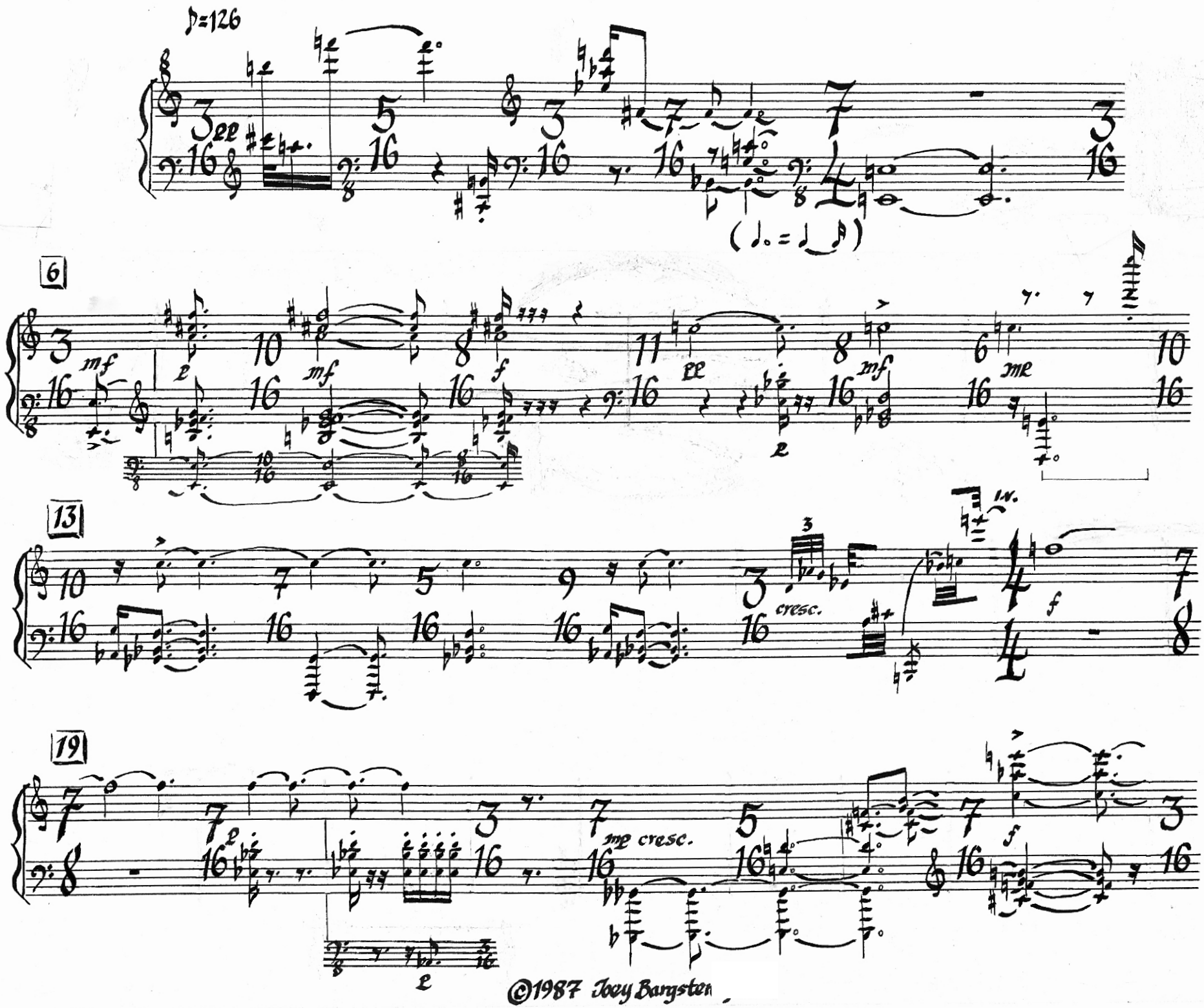
Rumi's Dance

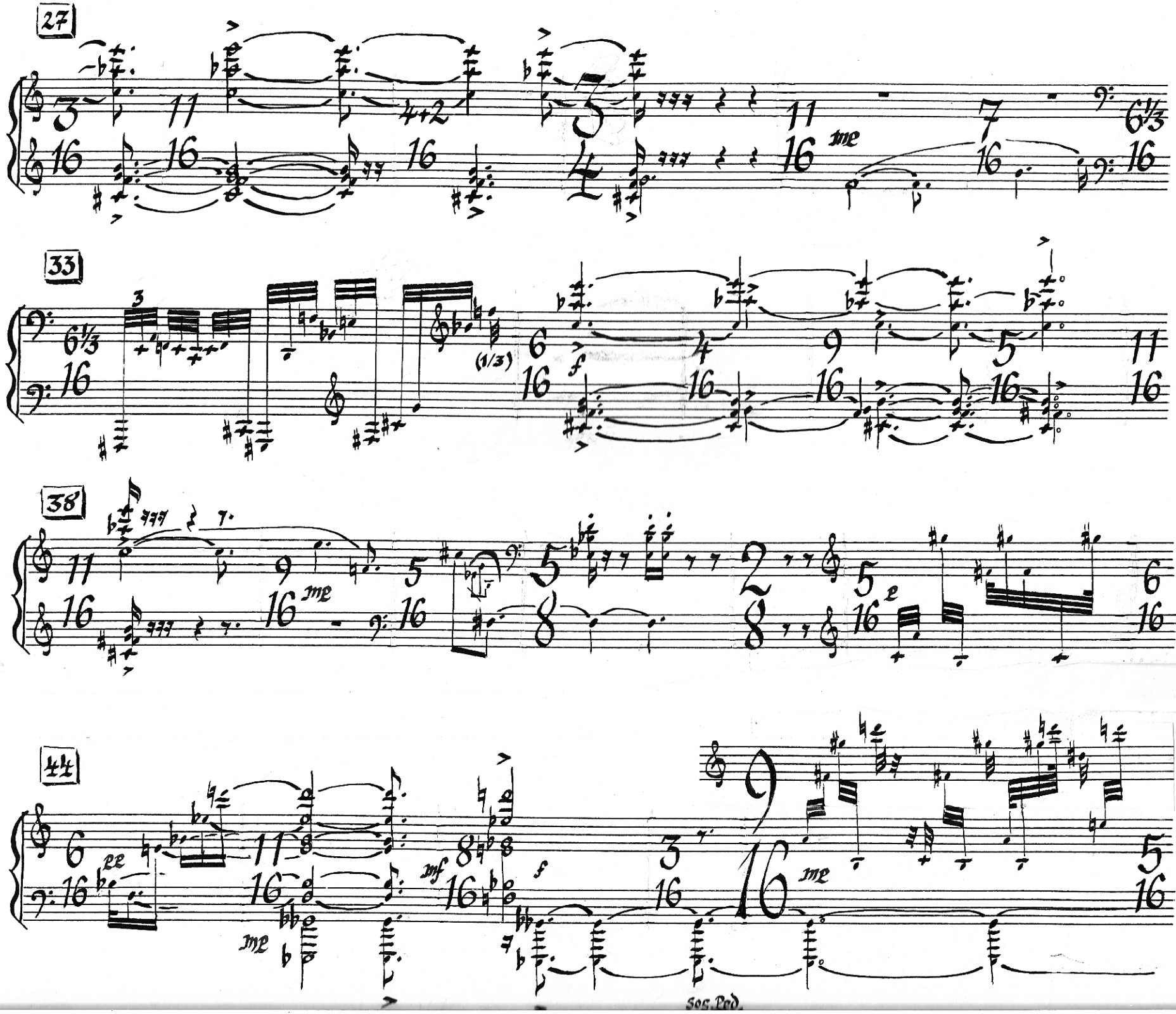
In a moment of revalation, one can be completely transformed. So it was in the case of Jelaluddin Rumi (1207 - 1273). Leading an ordinary life as a sober Islamic scholar and pedagogue, Rumi was shattered by a vision of The Beloved, an image he saw in the rugged face of the mysterious dervish, Shams al-Din, 'The Sun of Tabriz' . Together they shared SOHBET, a deep spiritual and ecstatic bond.

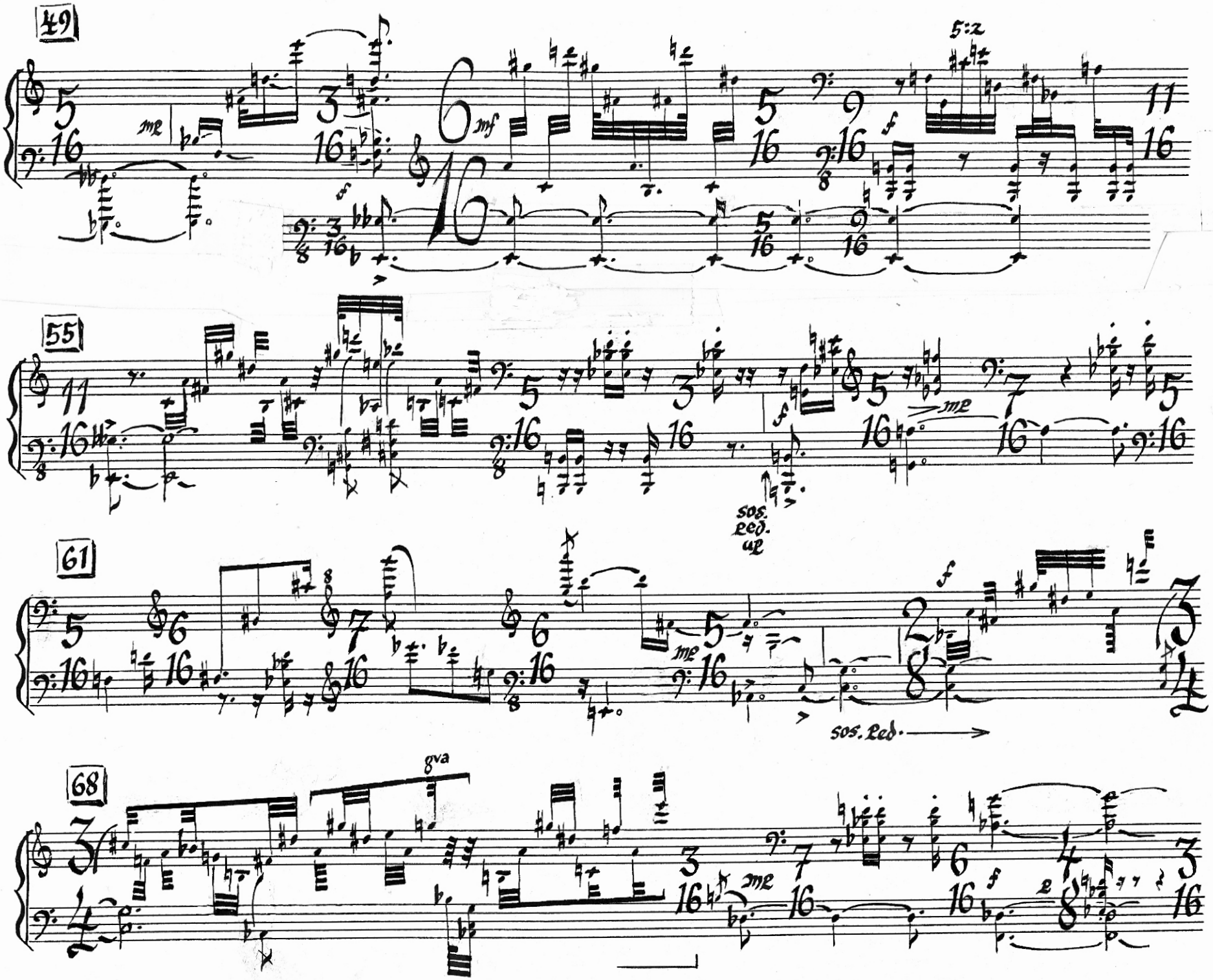
When Shams disappeared, Rumi turned in bewilderment and longing for the absent yet immanent Friend. To commemorate and enshrine Shams, he created the whirling dance of the Mevlevi dervishes—the SEMA—to the accompaniment of languid flute and pacing drum. As he danced, Rumi would enter into a trance and improvise passionately spiritual verse. Thousands of these odes and poems were quickly transcribed by his students.

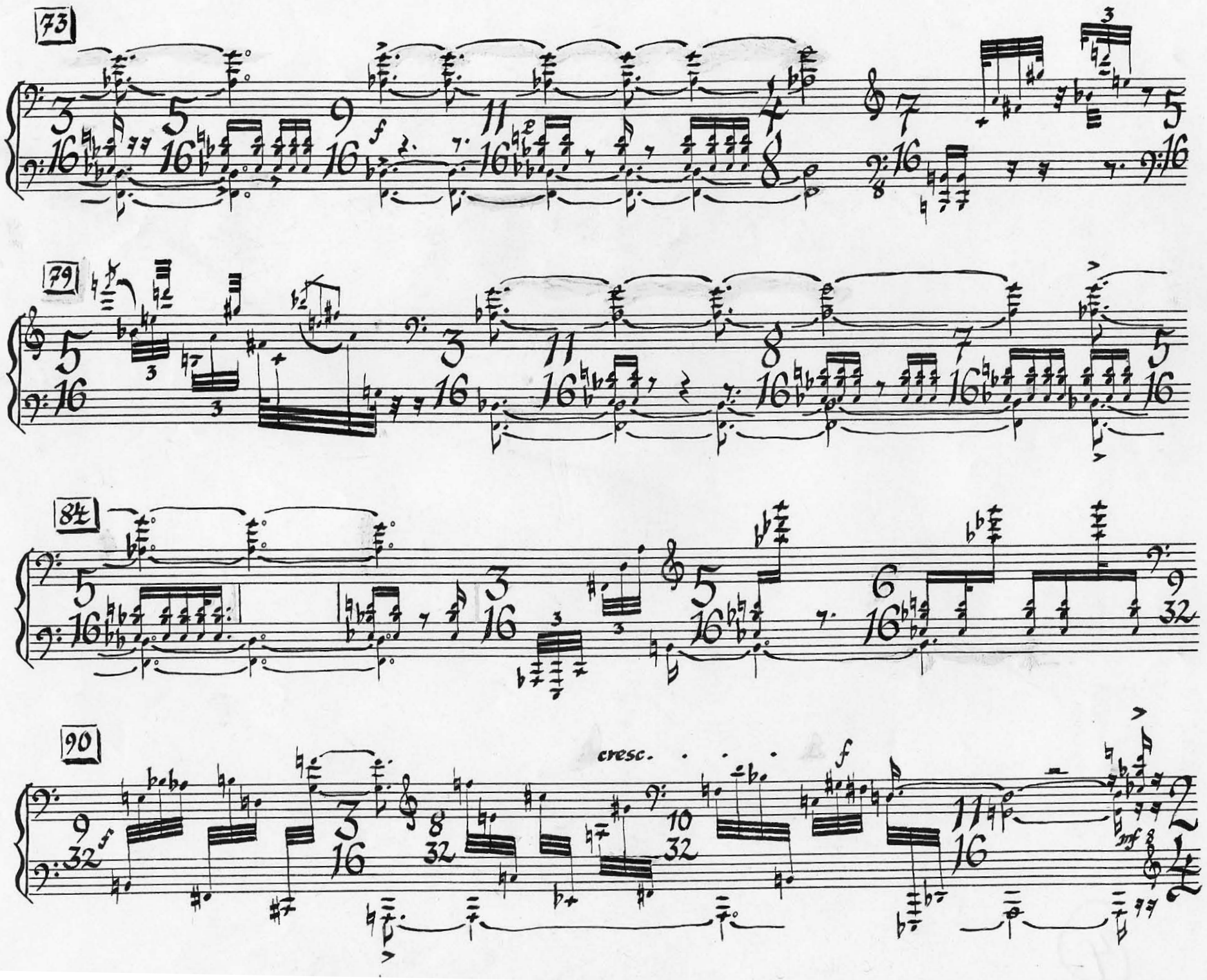
* * * * *

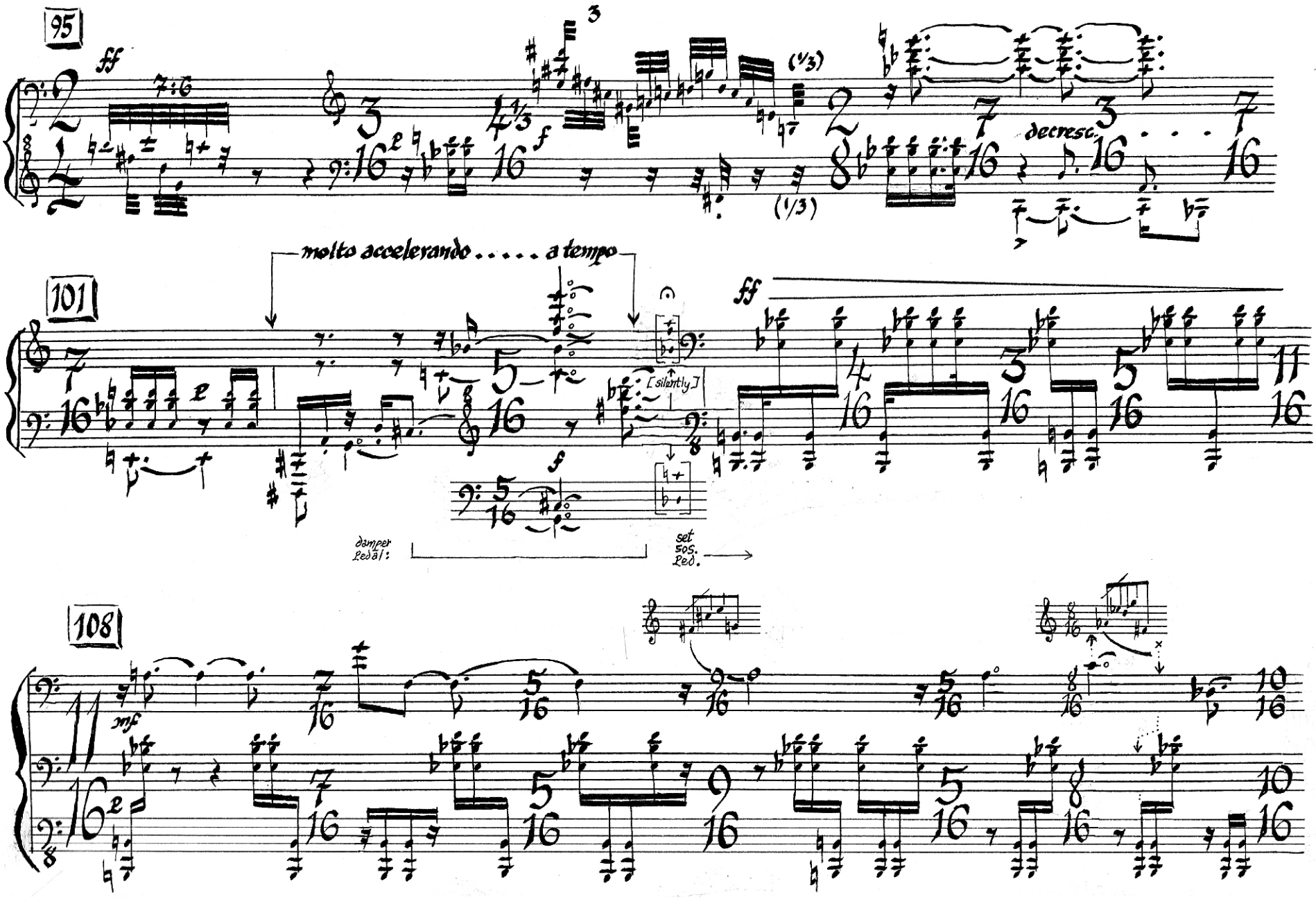
In SEMA, I attempted no literal depiction of the events of Rumi's life. Rather, the music grows from an enchantment with the transfiguring nature of personal vision.

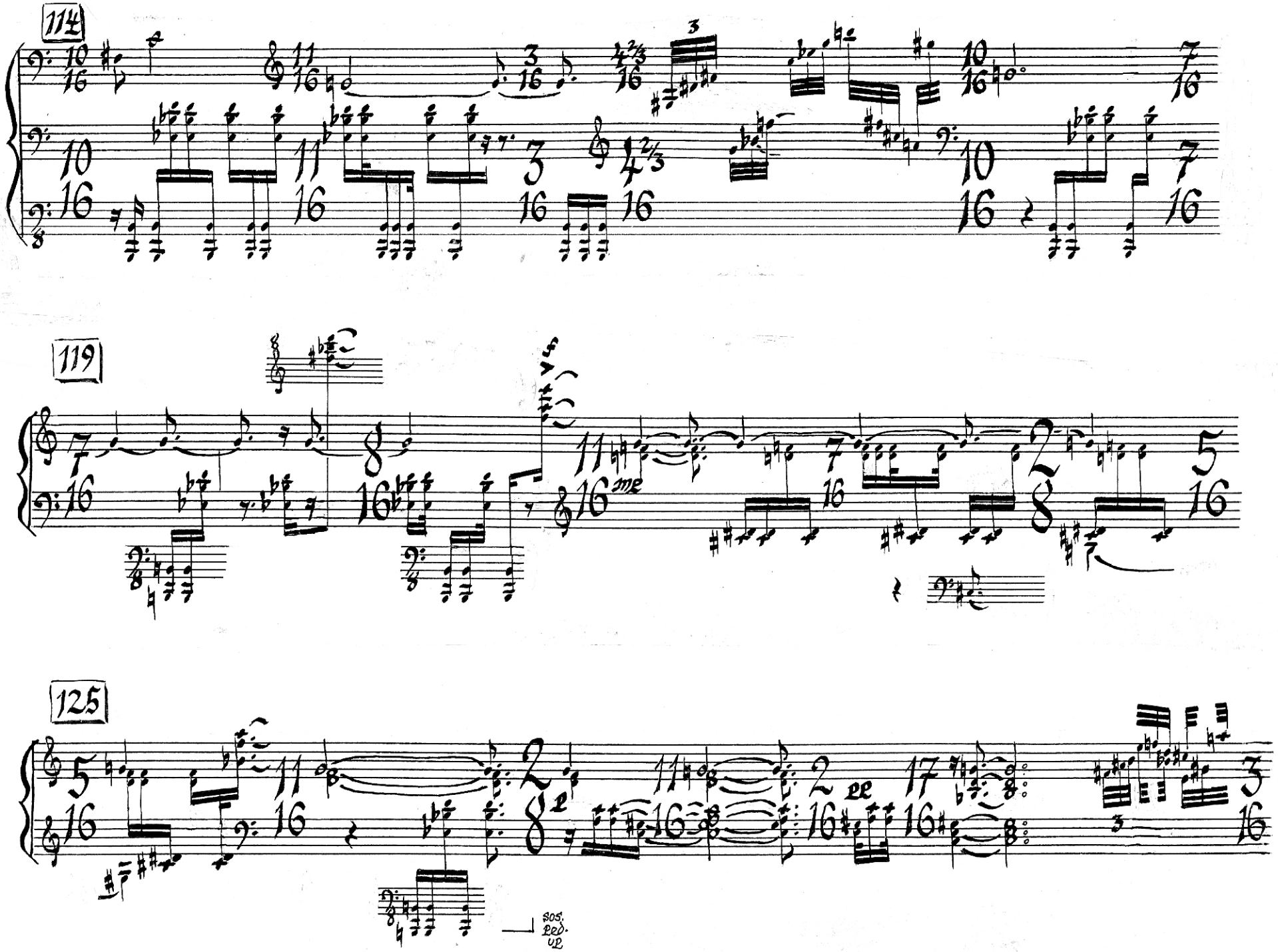

♪=126
pp
(♩. = ♩ ♪)
6
mf
mf
f
pp
mf
mp
13
cresc.
f
19
mp cresc.
f
©1987 Joey Baron

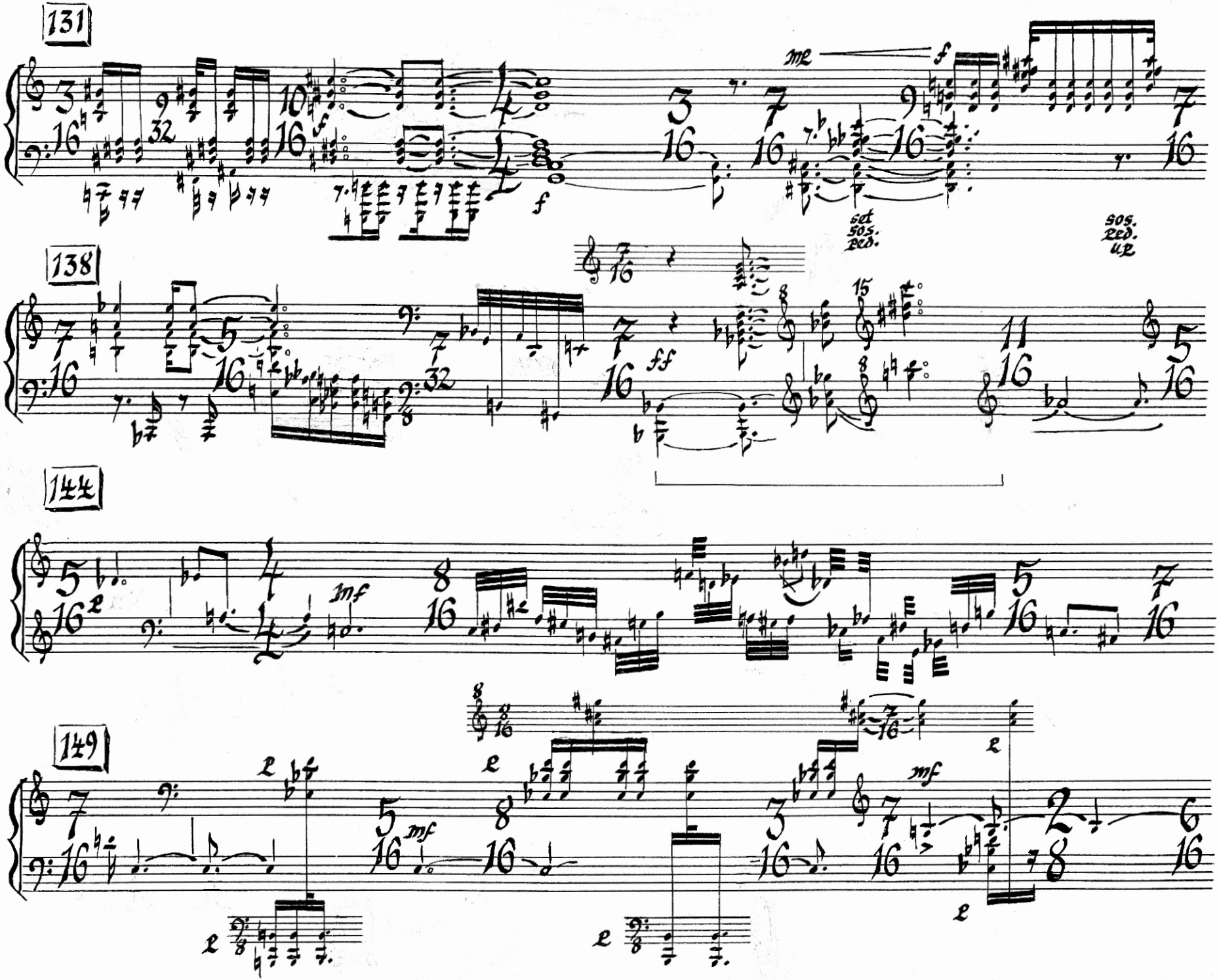

27
33
38
44
Soc. Ped.

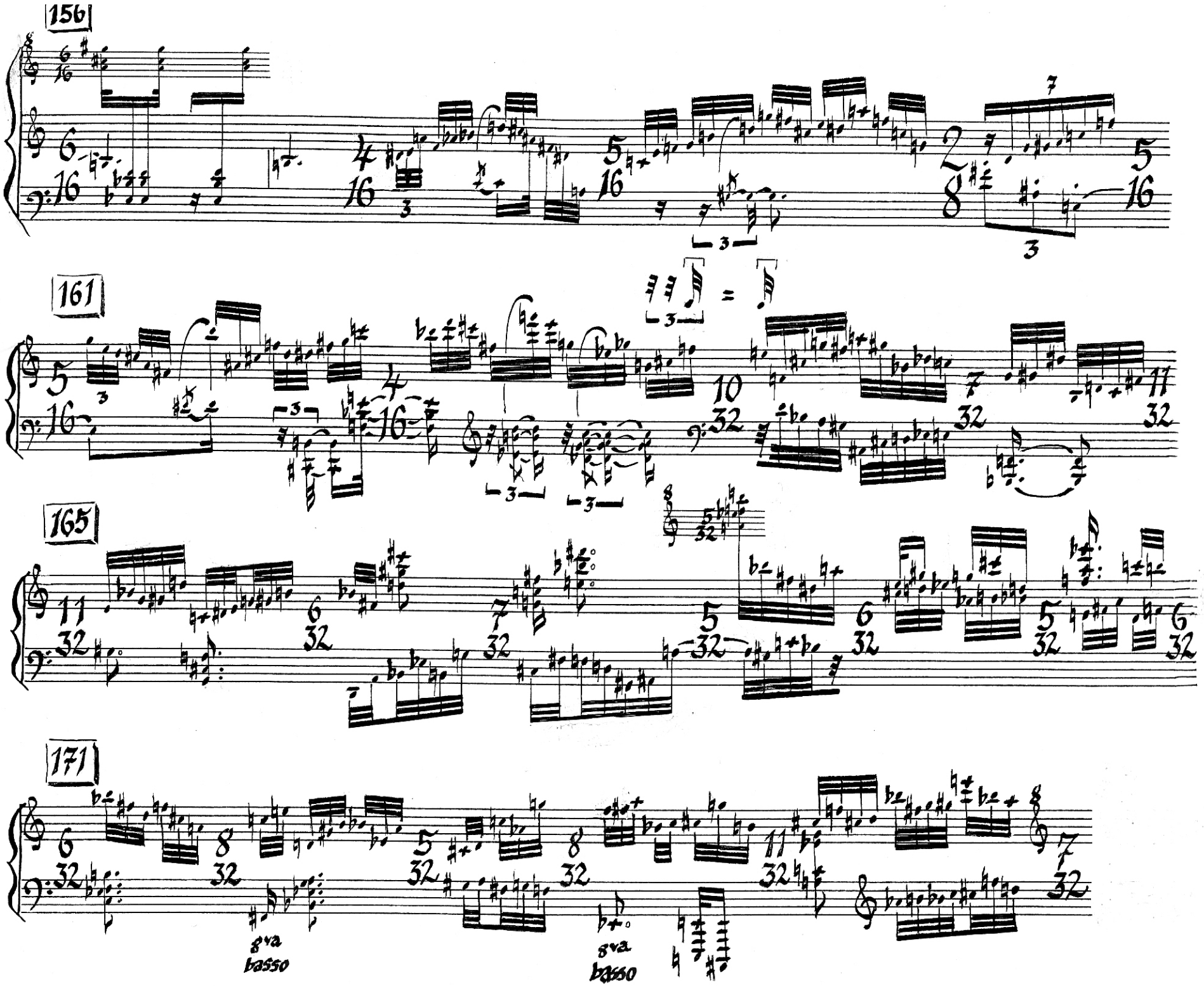

49
5:2
55
sos. ped. up
61
sos. ped.
68
8va

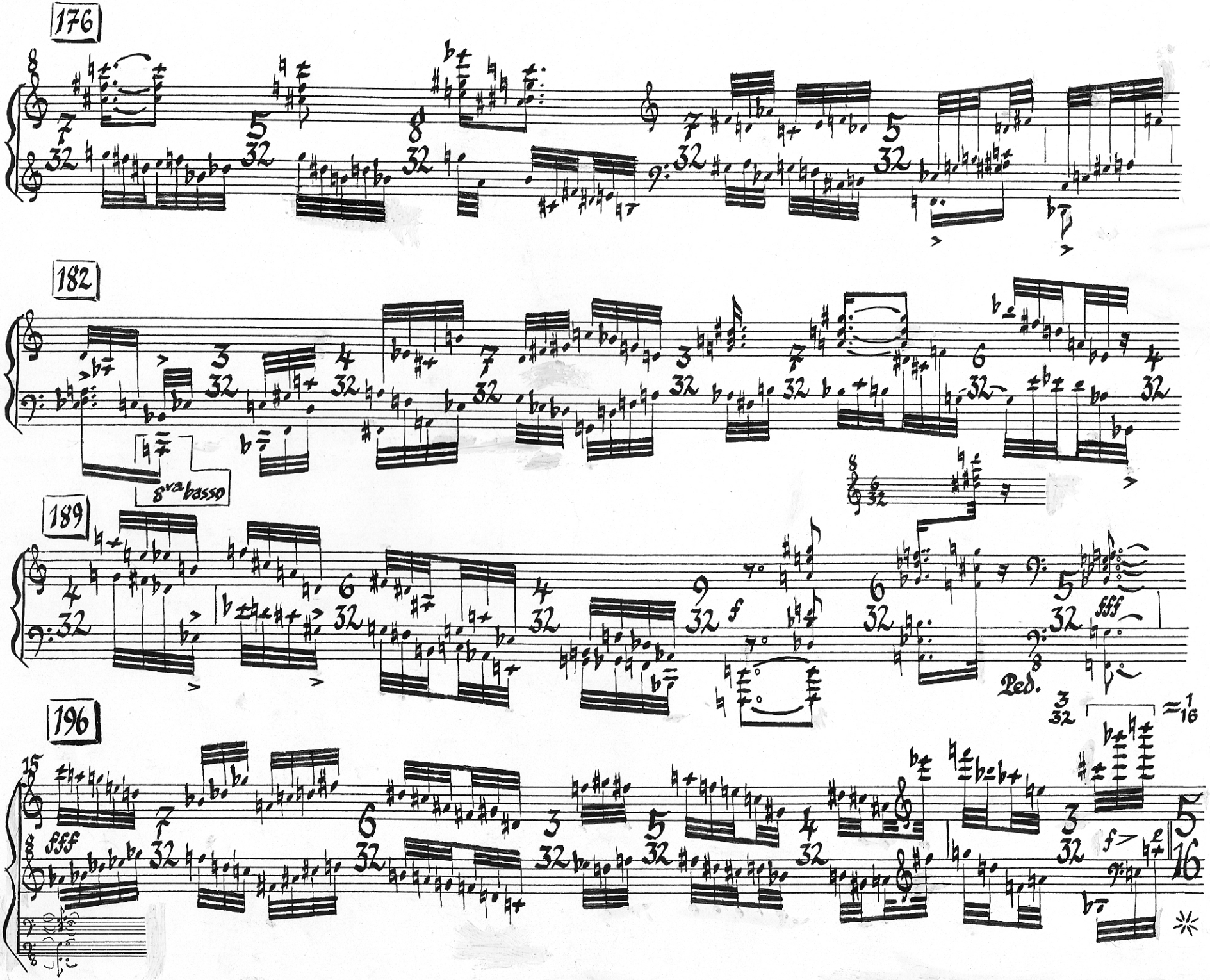

73
79
84
90
cresc.

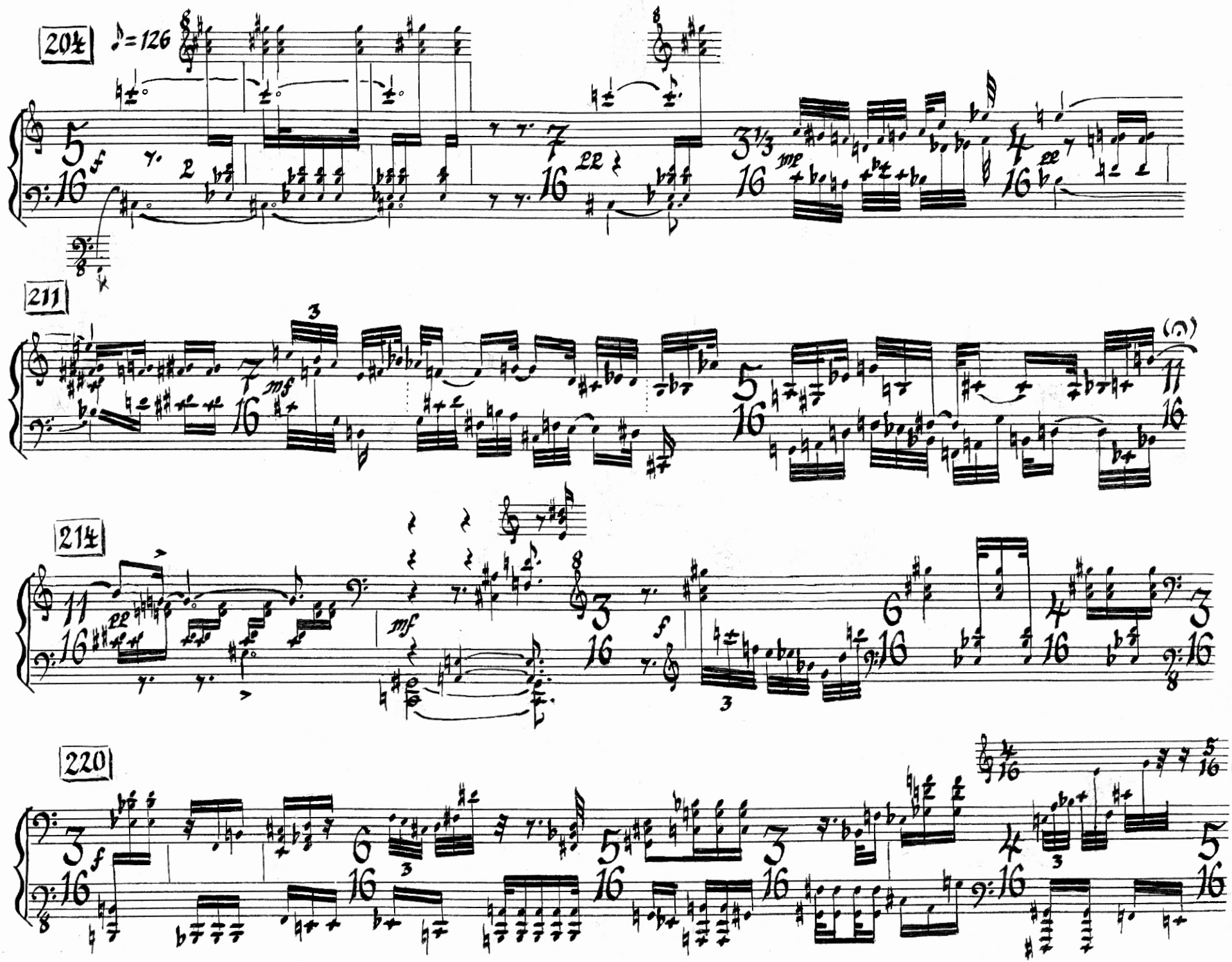

95
ff
f
(1/3)
(1/3)
decresc.
molto accelerando . . . . . a tempo
101
[silently]
ff
f
damper pedal:
set sos. ped.
108
mf

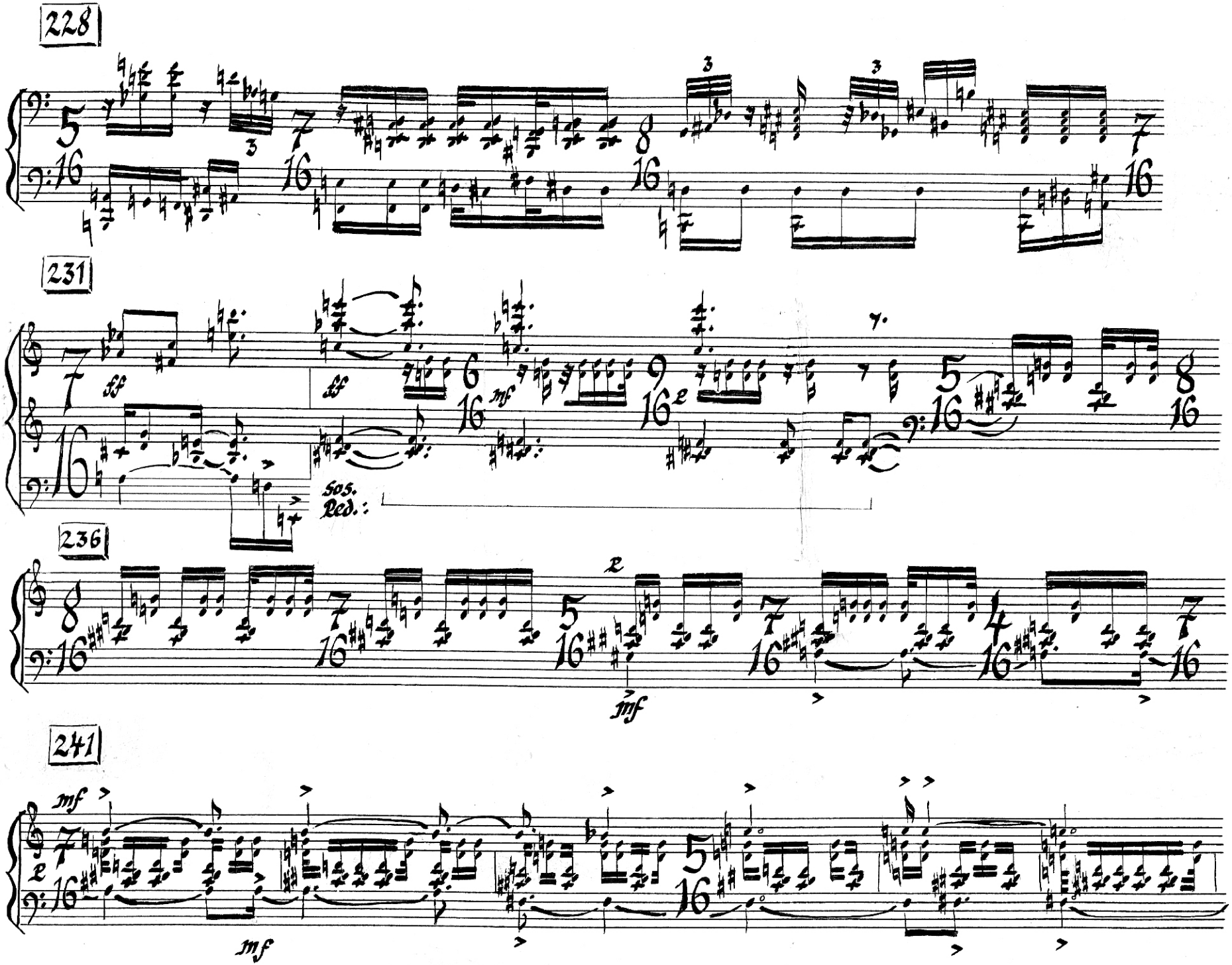

114
119
125
sos. ped. up

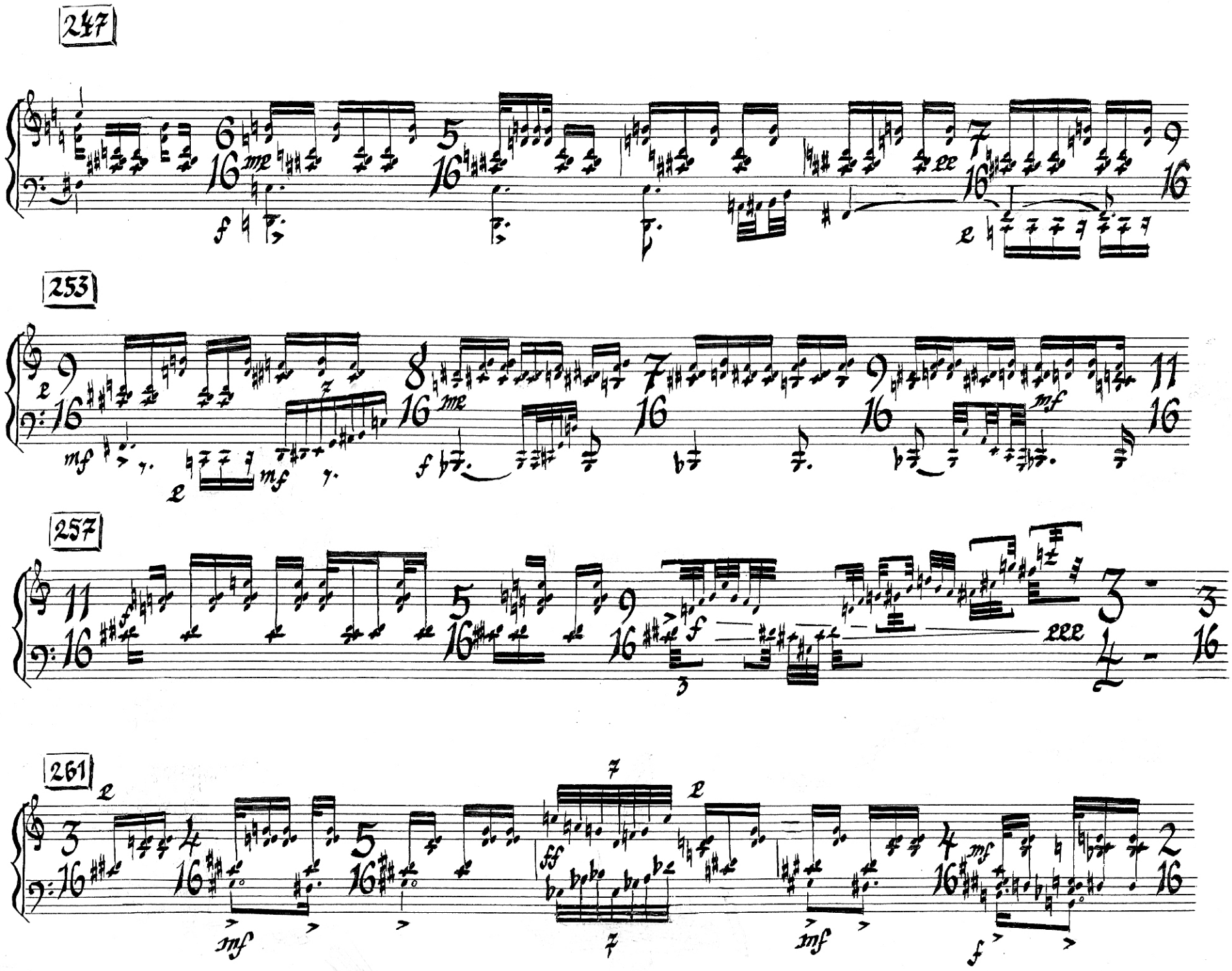

131
mp
f
set sos. ped.
sos. ped. up
138
ff
144
mf
149
mf
mf

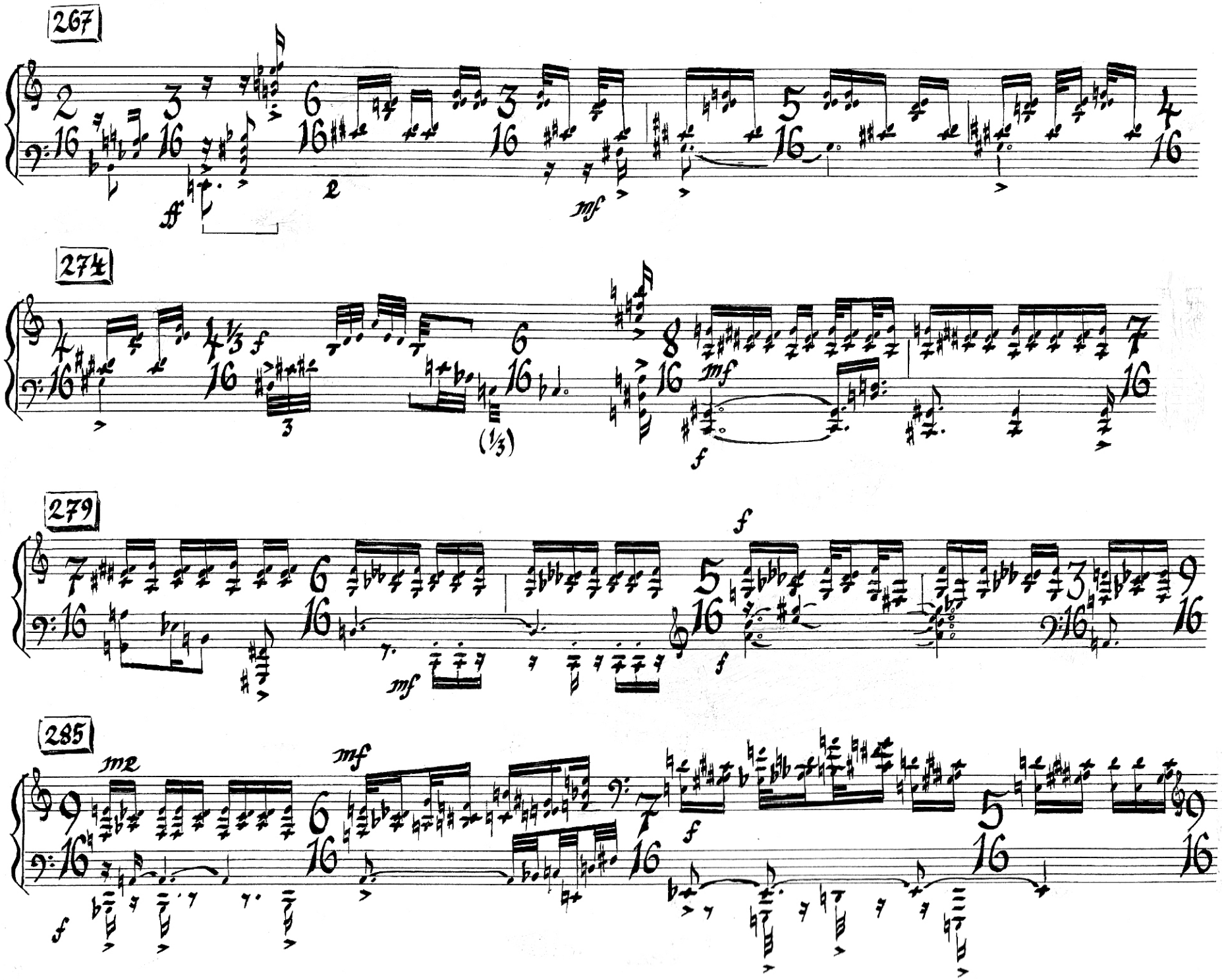

156
161
165
171
8va
basso
8va
basso

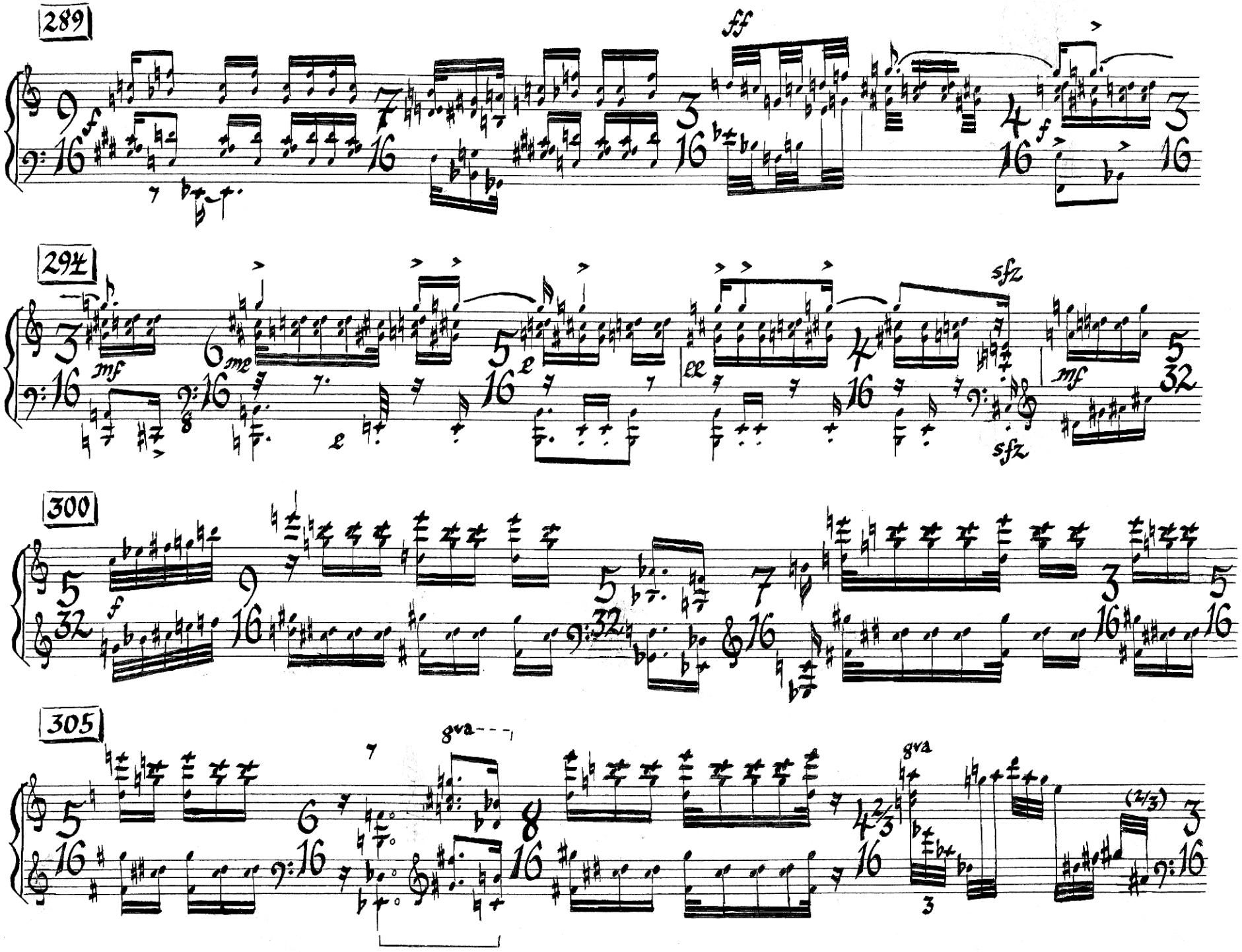

176
182
8va basso
189
f
fff
Ped.
196
fff
f

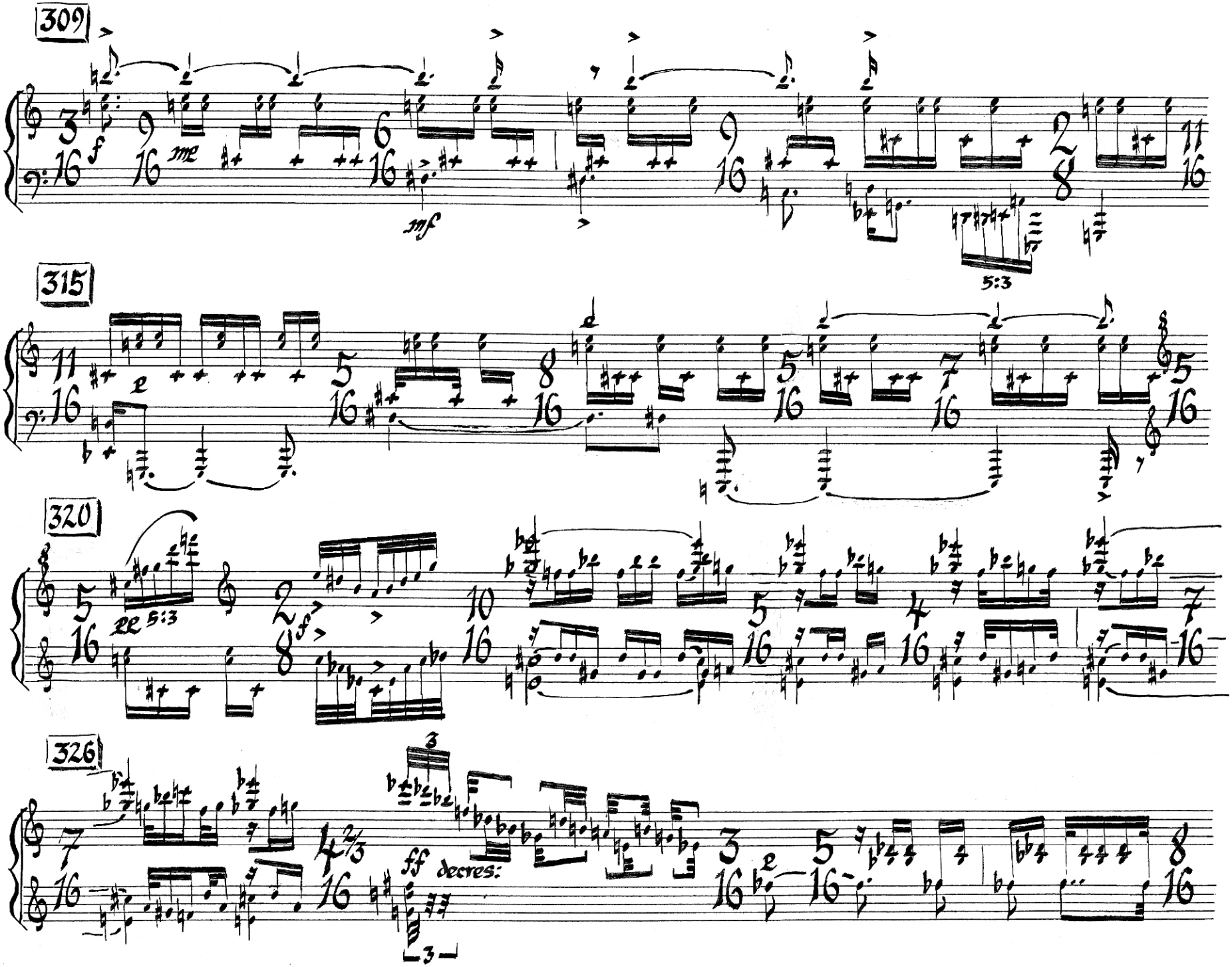

204
♪=126
211
214
220

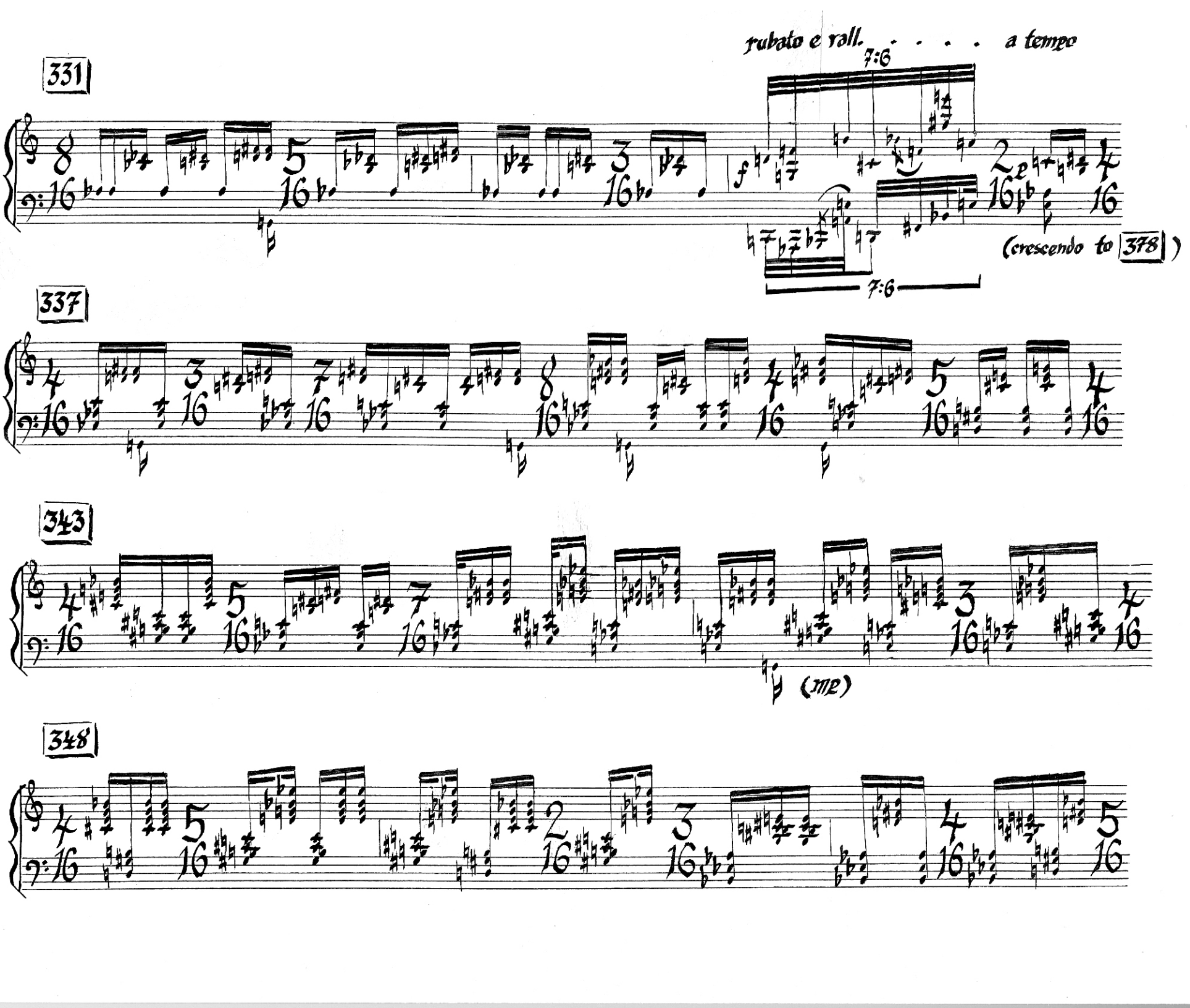

228
231
ff
ff
mf
sos.
Ped.
236
mf
241
mf
mf


247
253
257
261

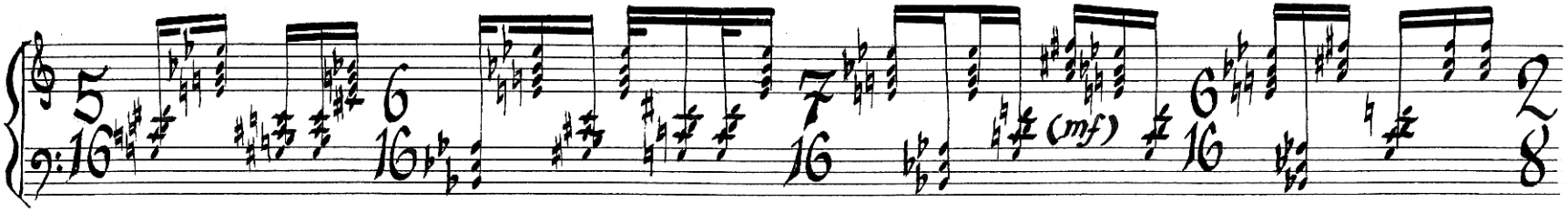

267
274
279
285


289
294
300
305
8va
8va


309
f
me
mf
5:3
315
p
320
pp
5:3
ff
326
3
ff
decres:
3


rubato e rall. . . . . a tempo
331
7:6
f
(crescendo to 378)
7:6
337
343
(me)
348

355



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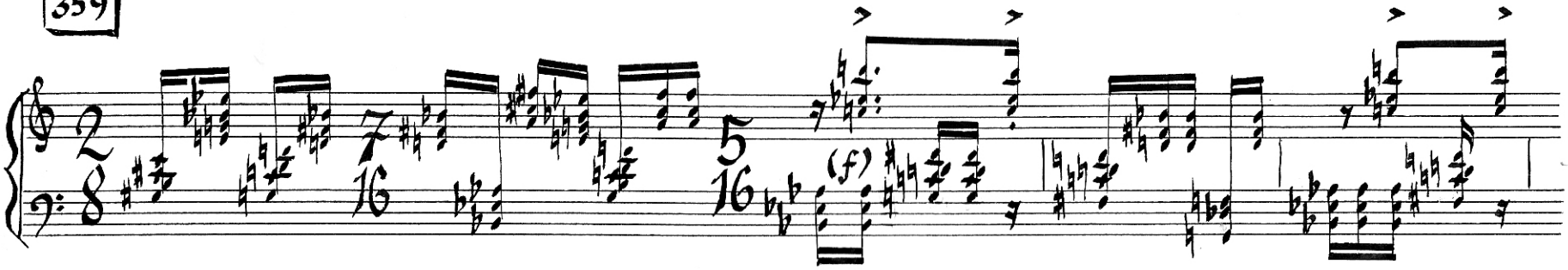

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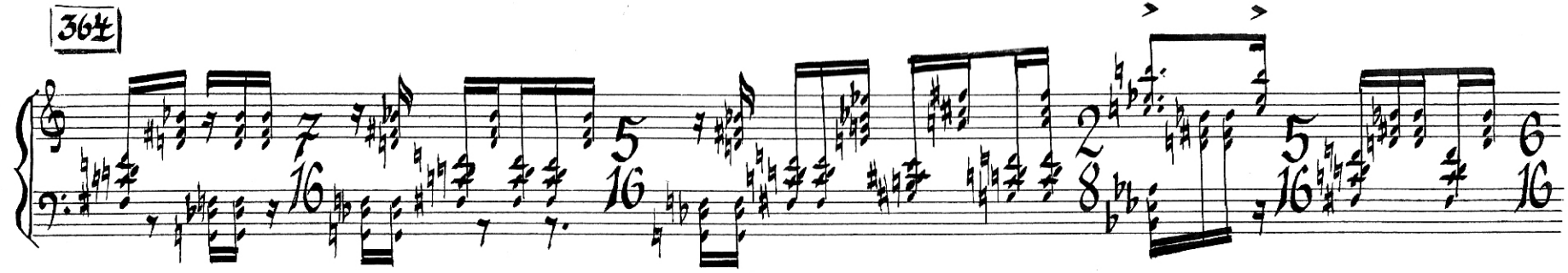

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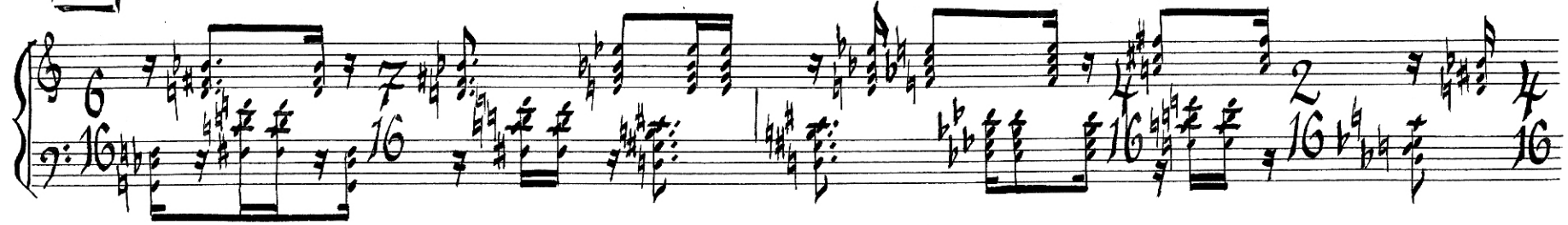
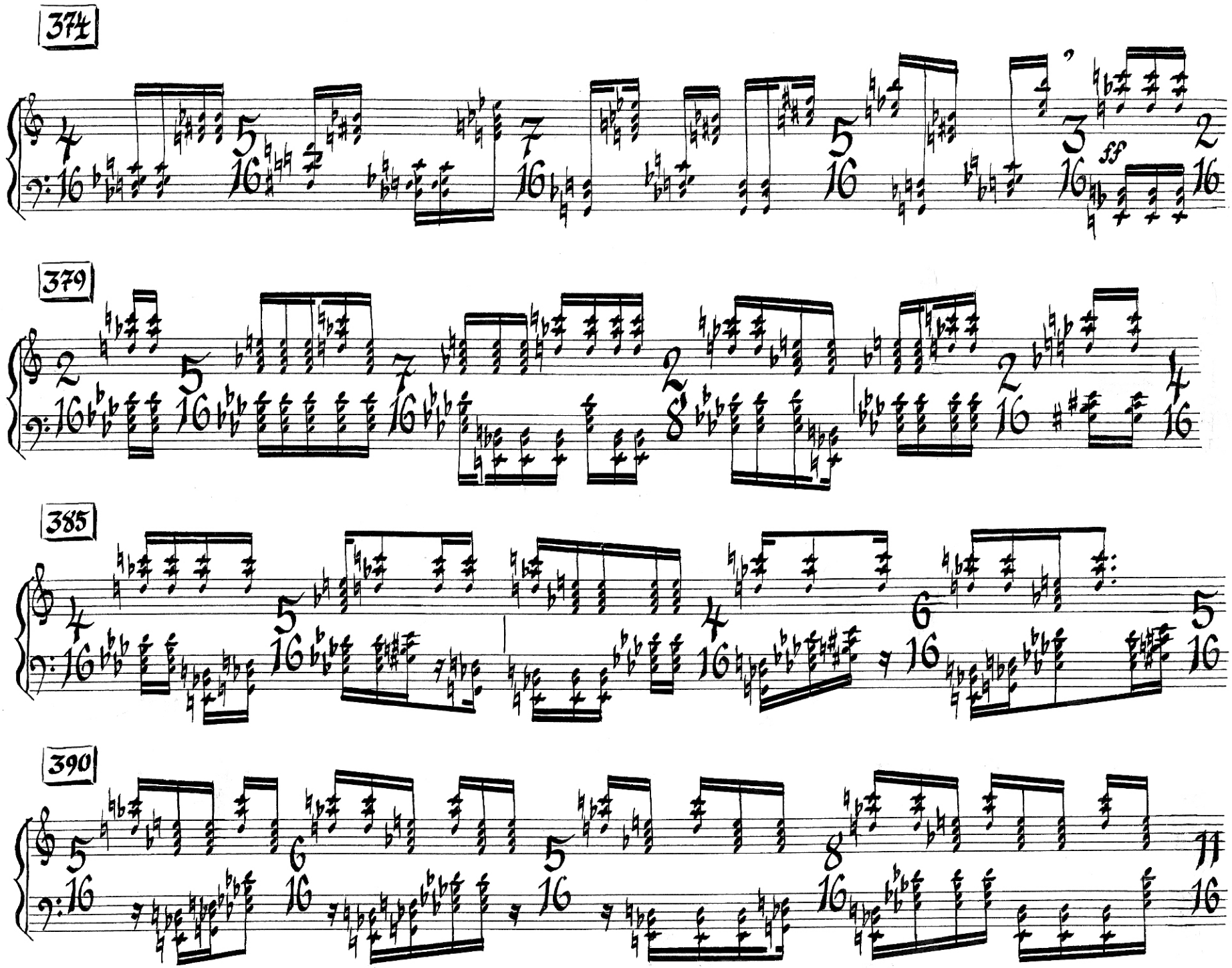
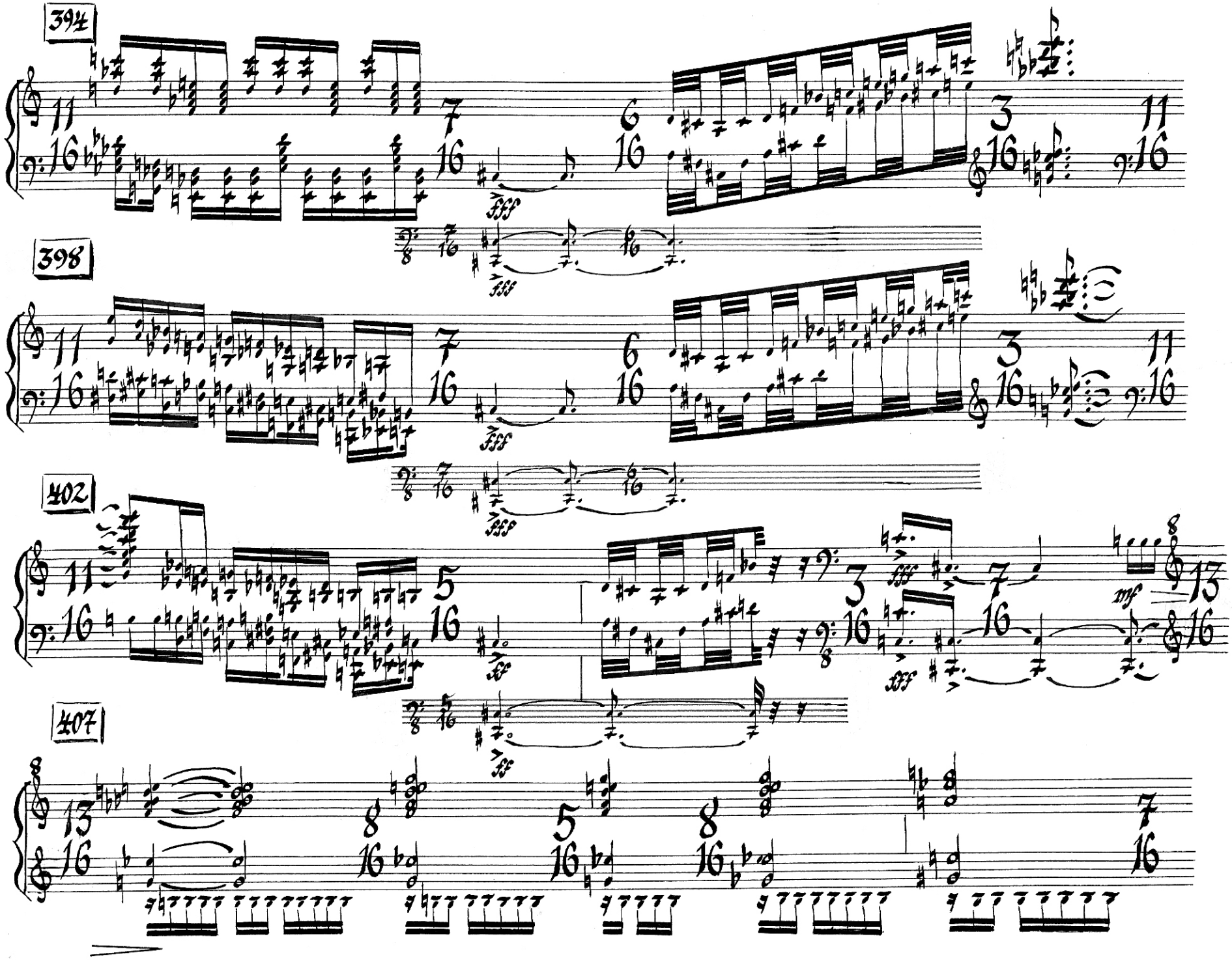
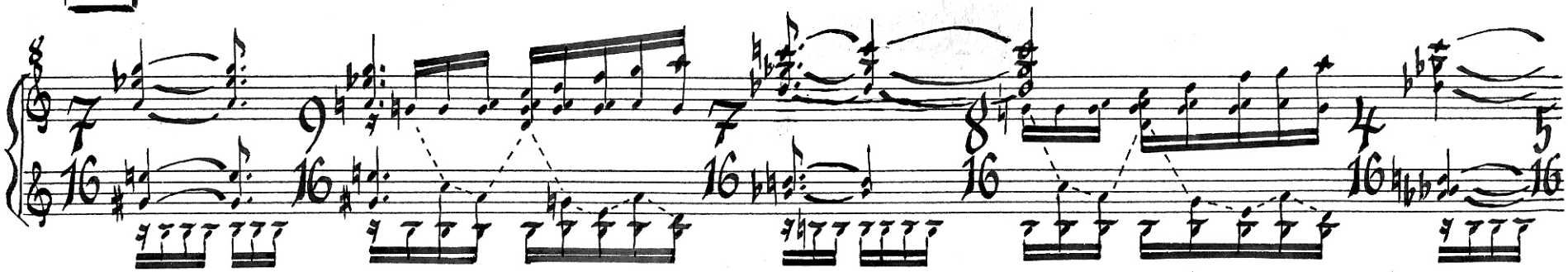



374
379
385
390
ff


394
398
402
407
fff
ff
mf

412



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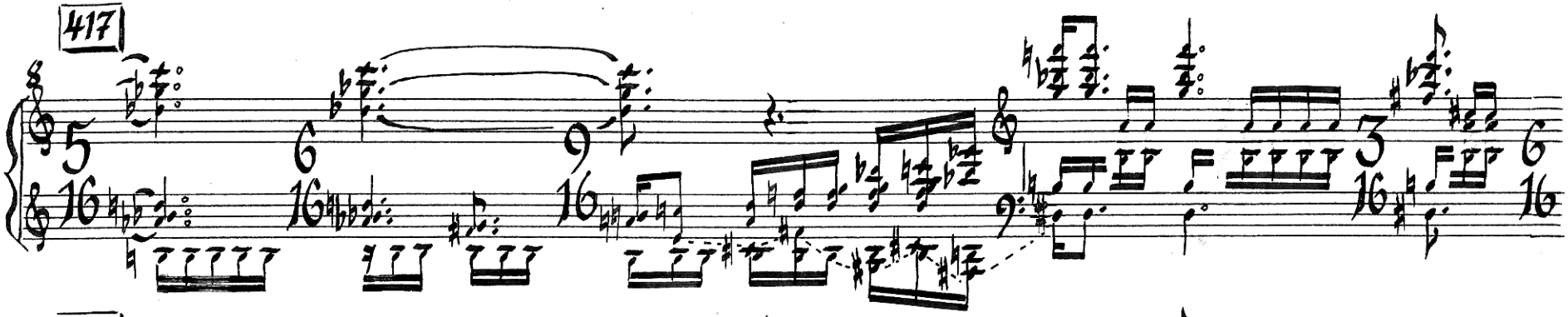

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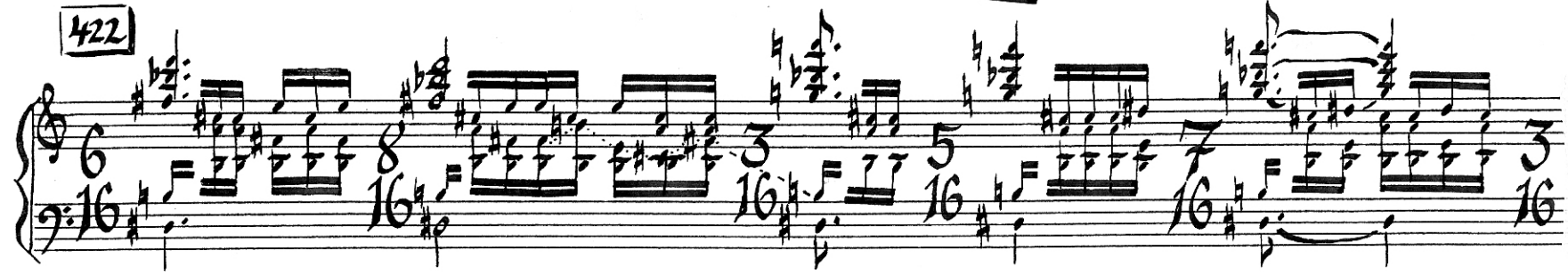

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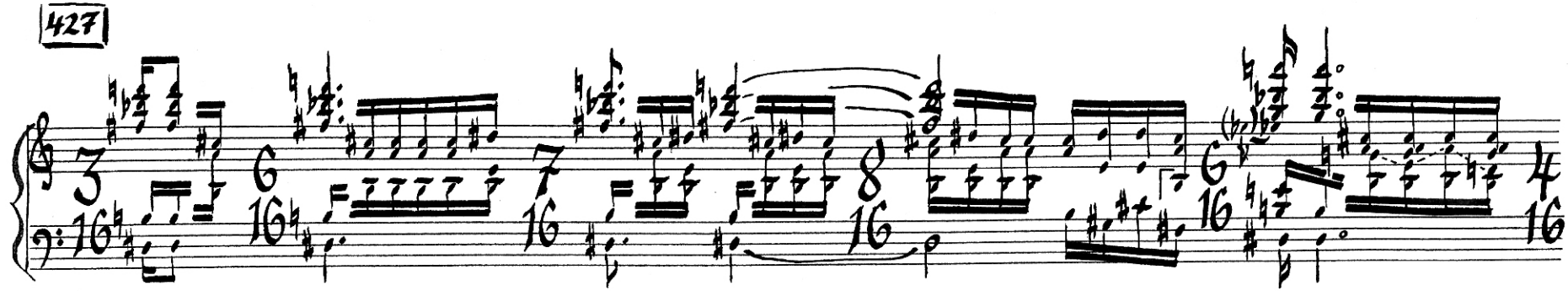
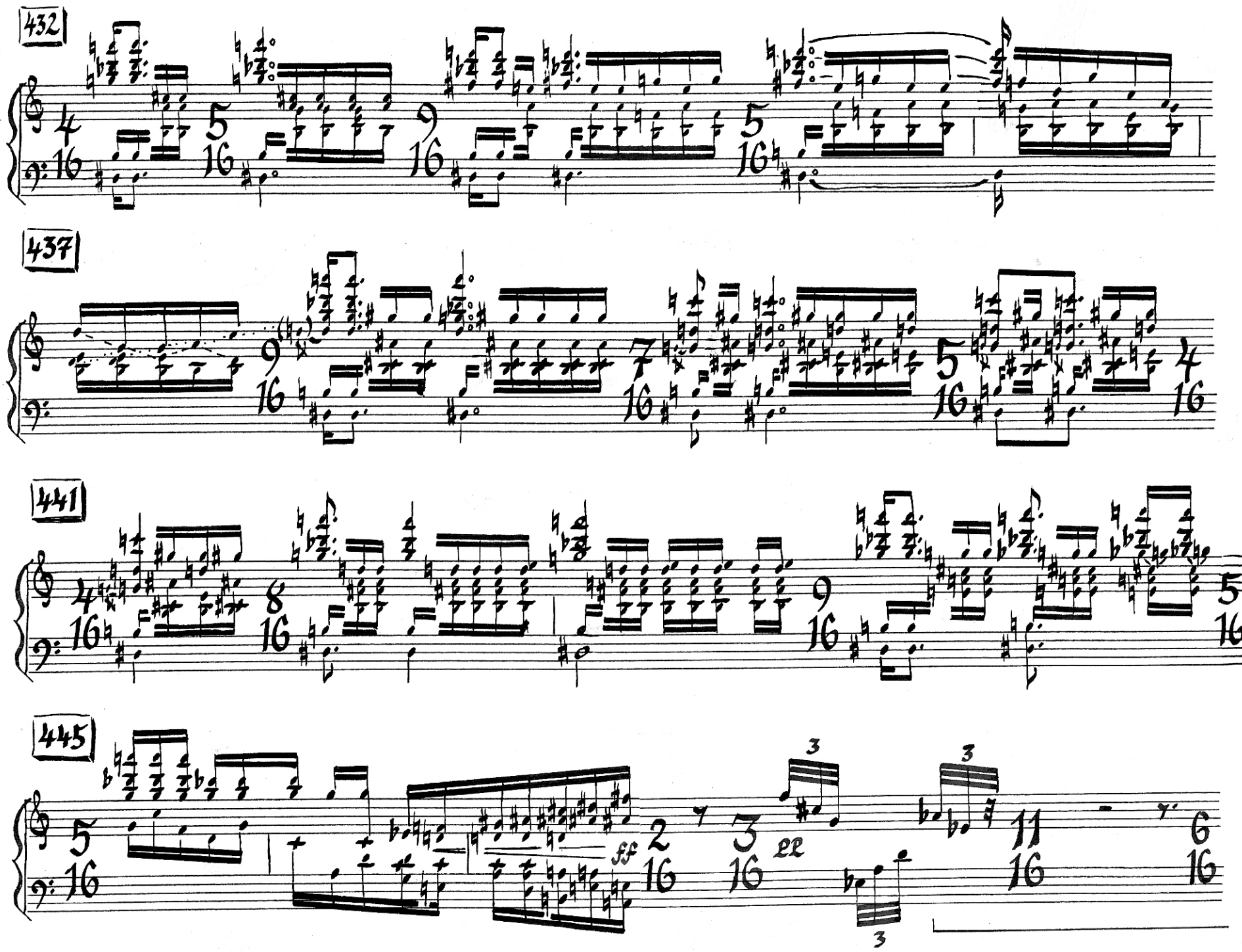
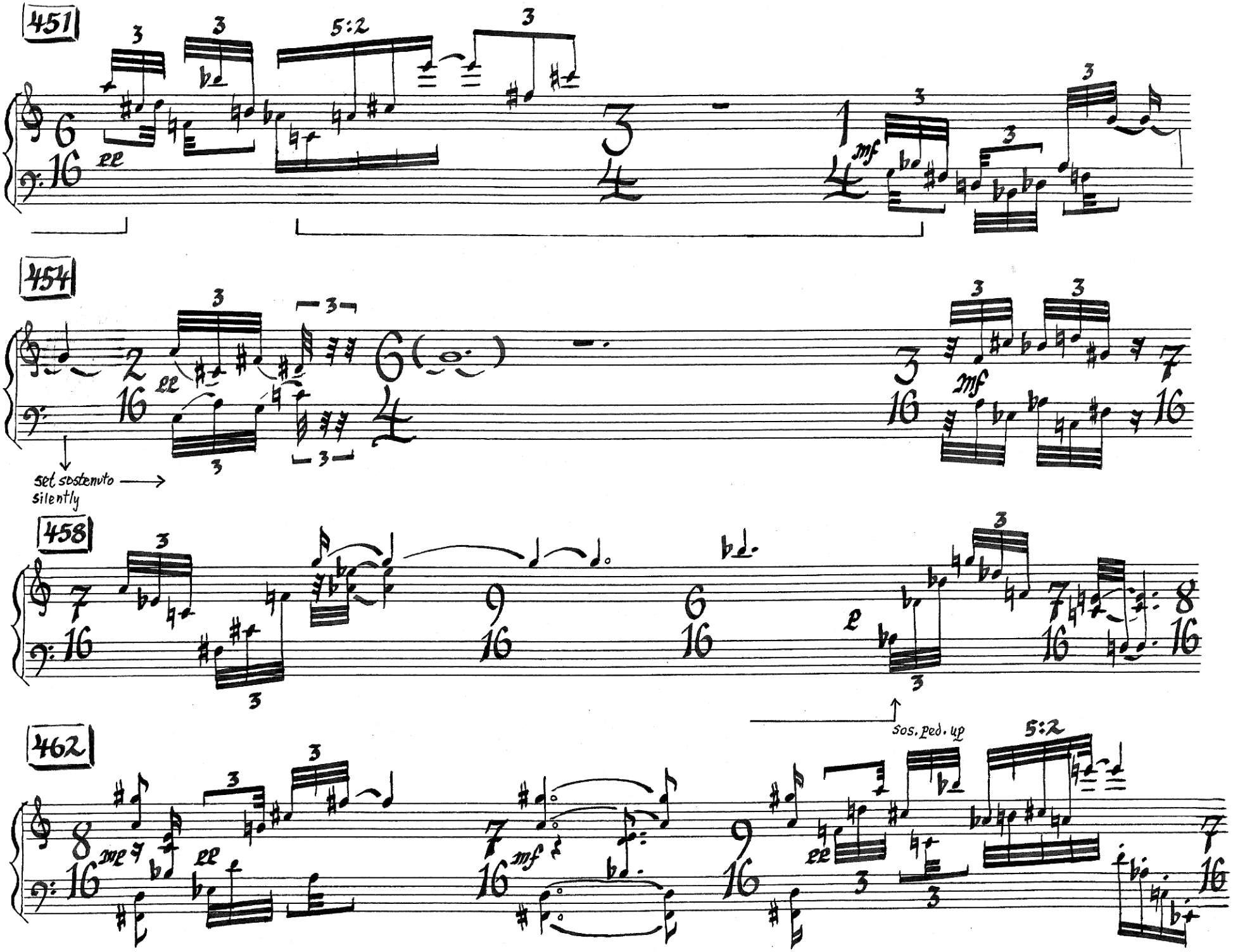
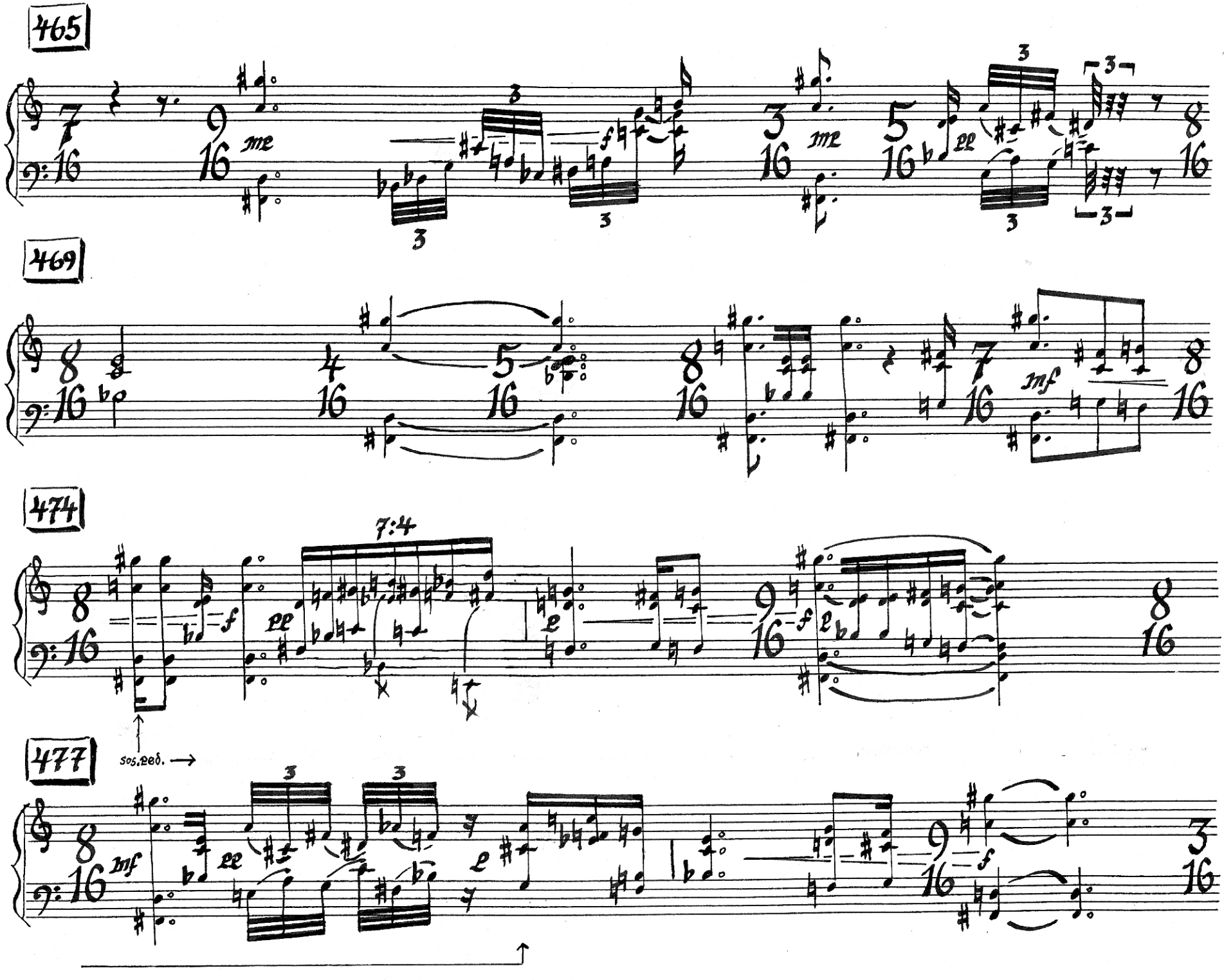
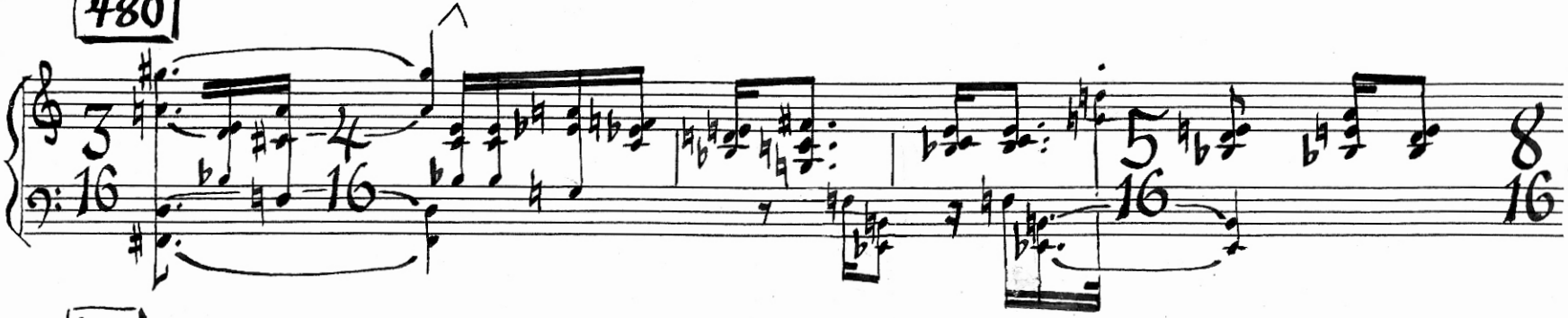



432
437
441
445
ff
ff


451
454
458
462
pp
mf
set sostenuto
silently
sos. ped. up
5:2


465
469
474
7:4
sos.ped.
477

480



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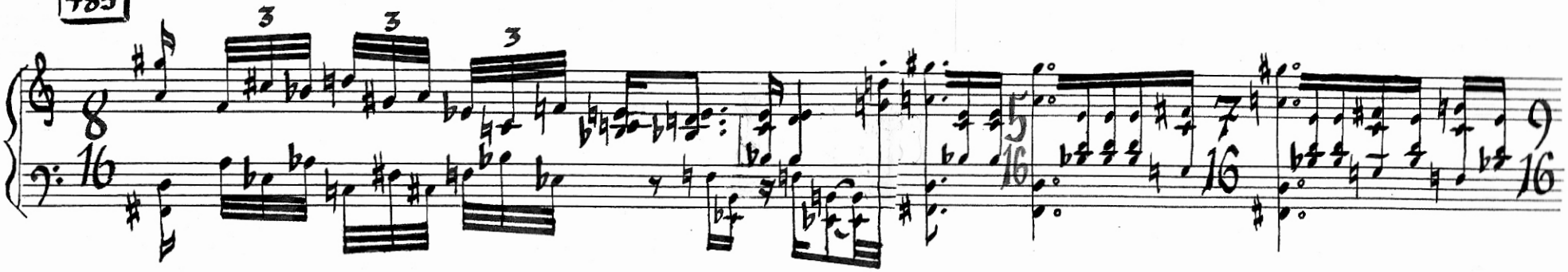

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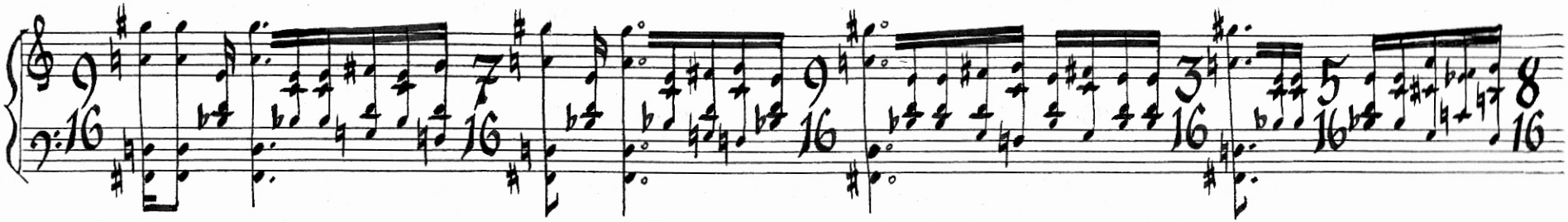

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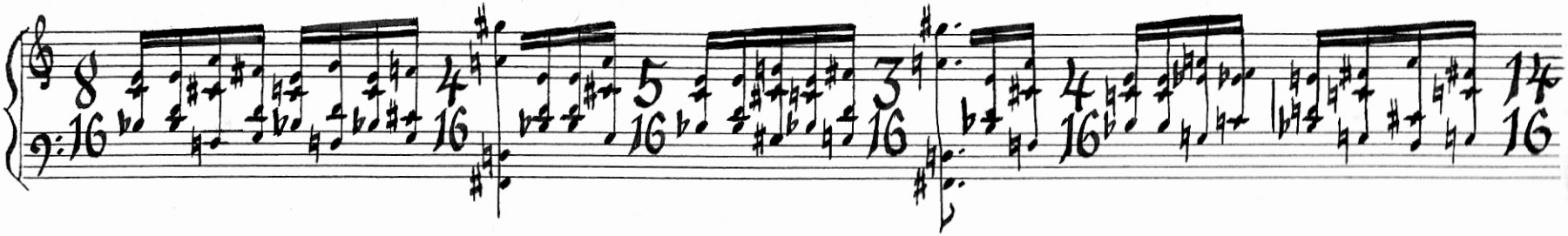
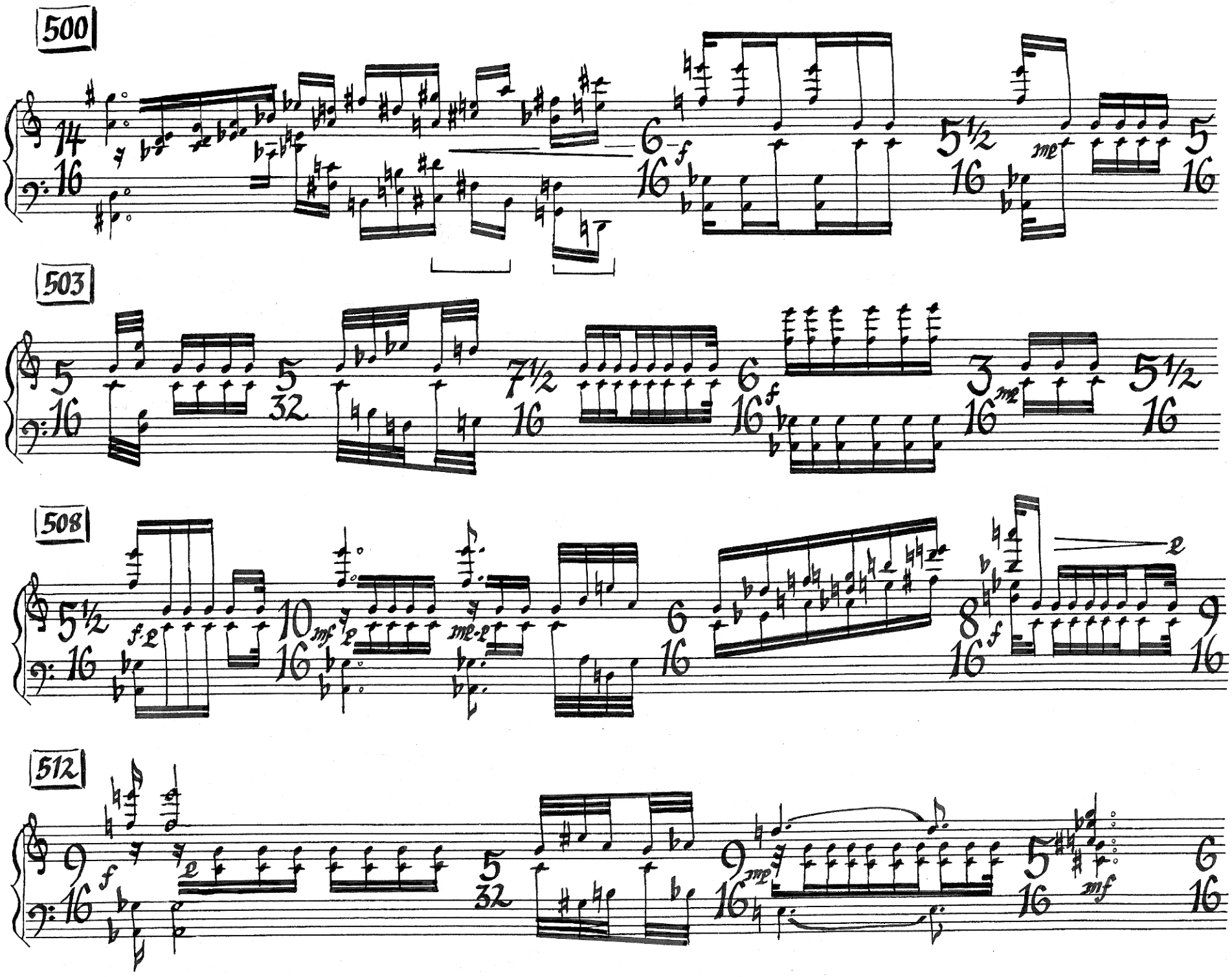
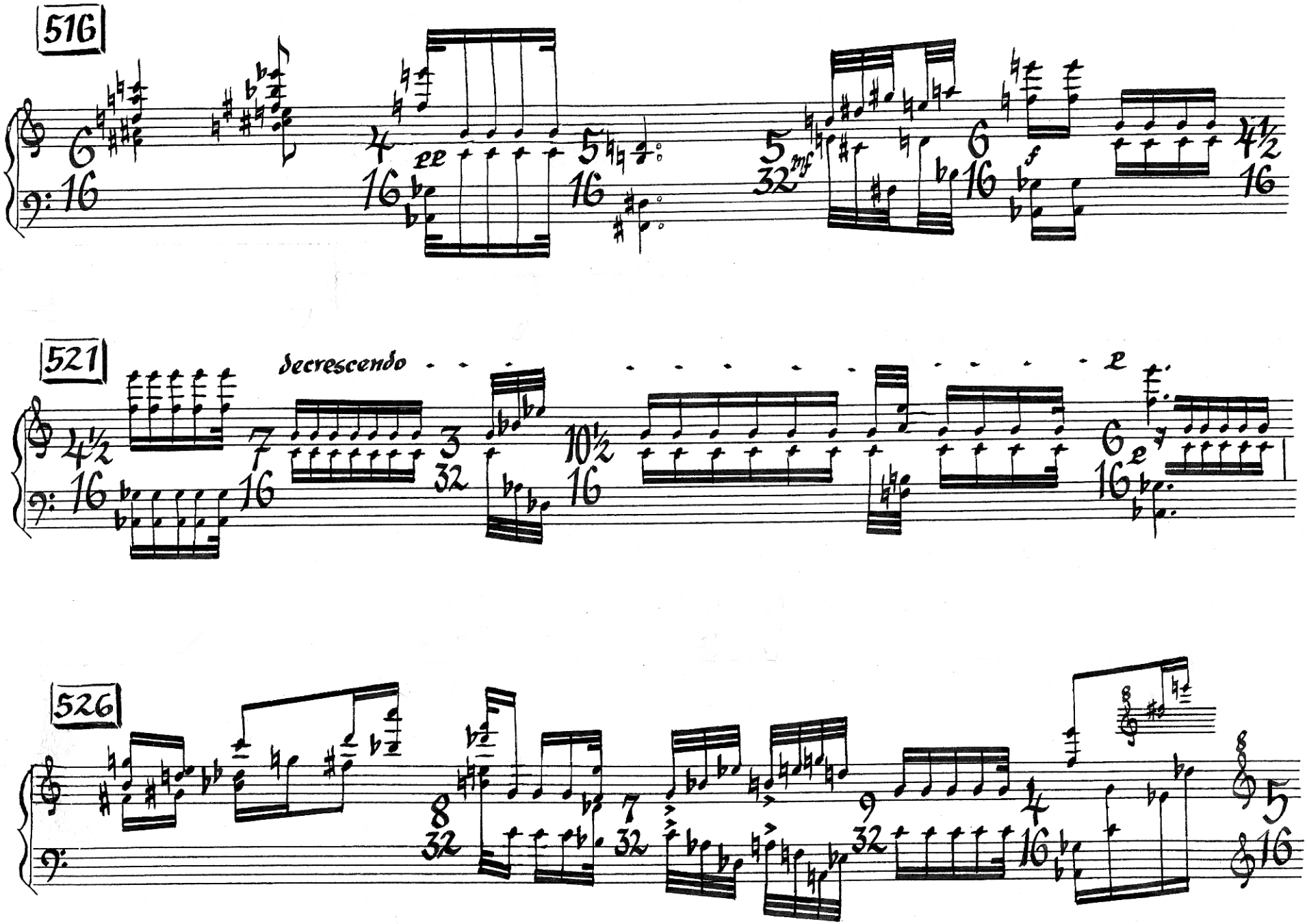
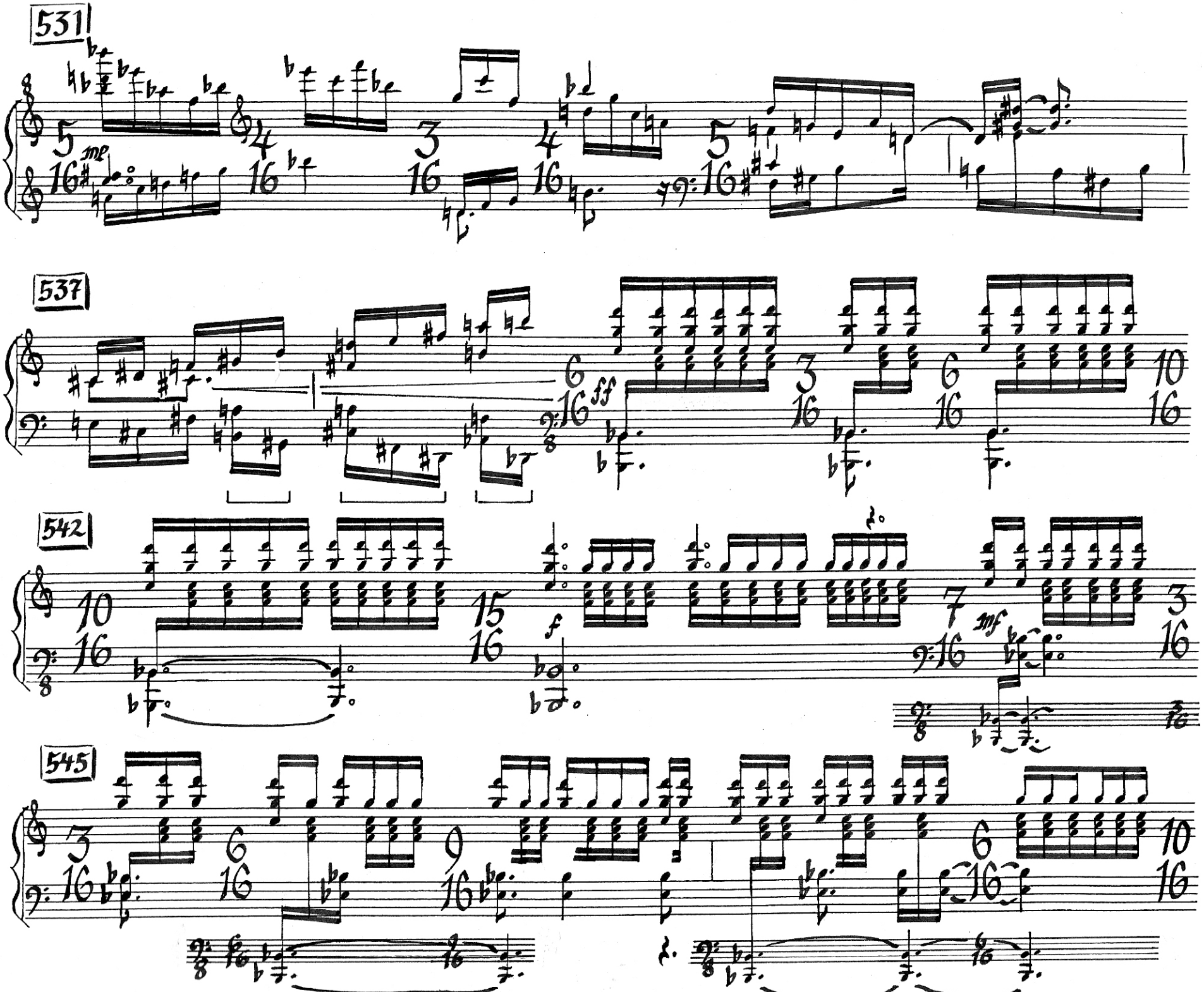
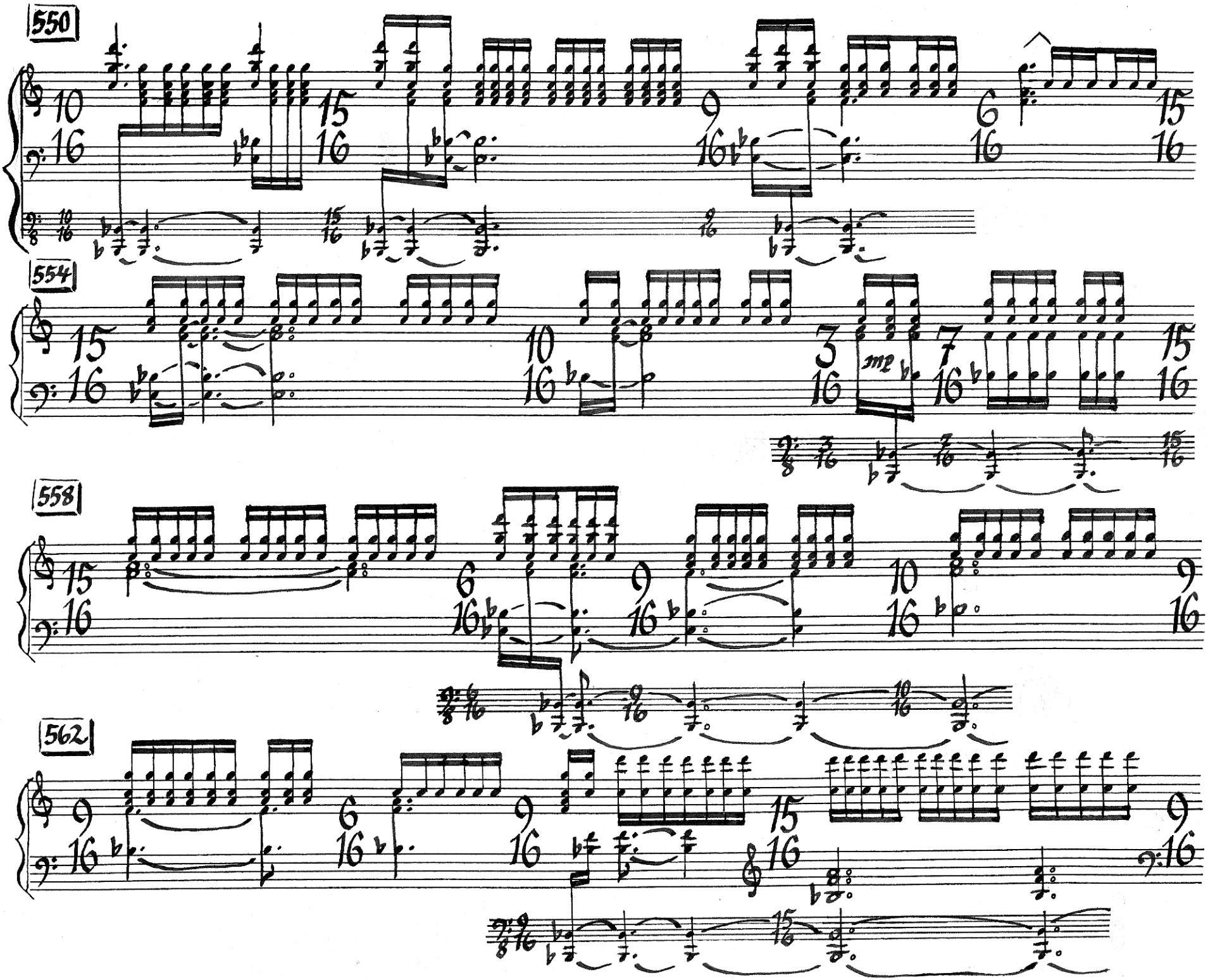
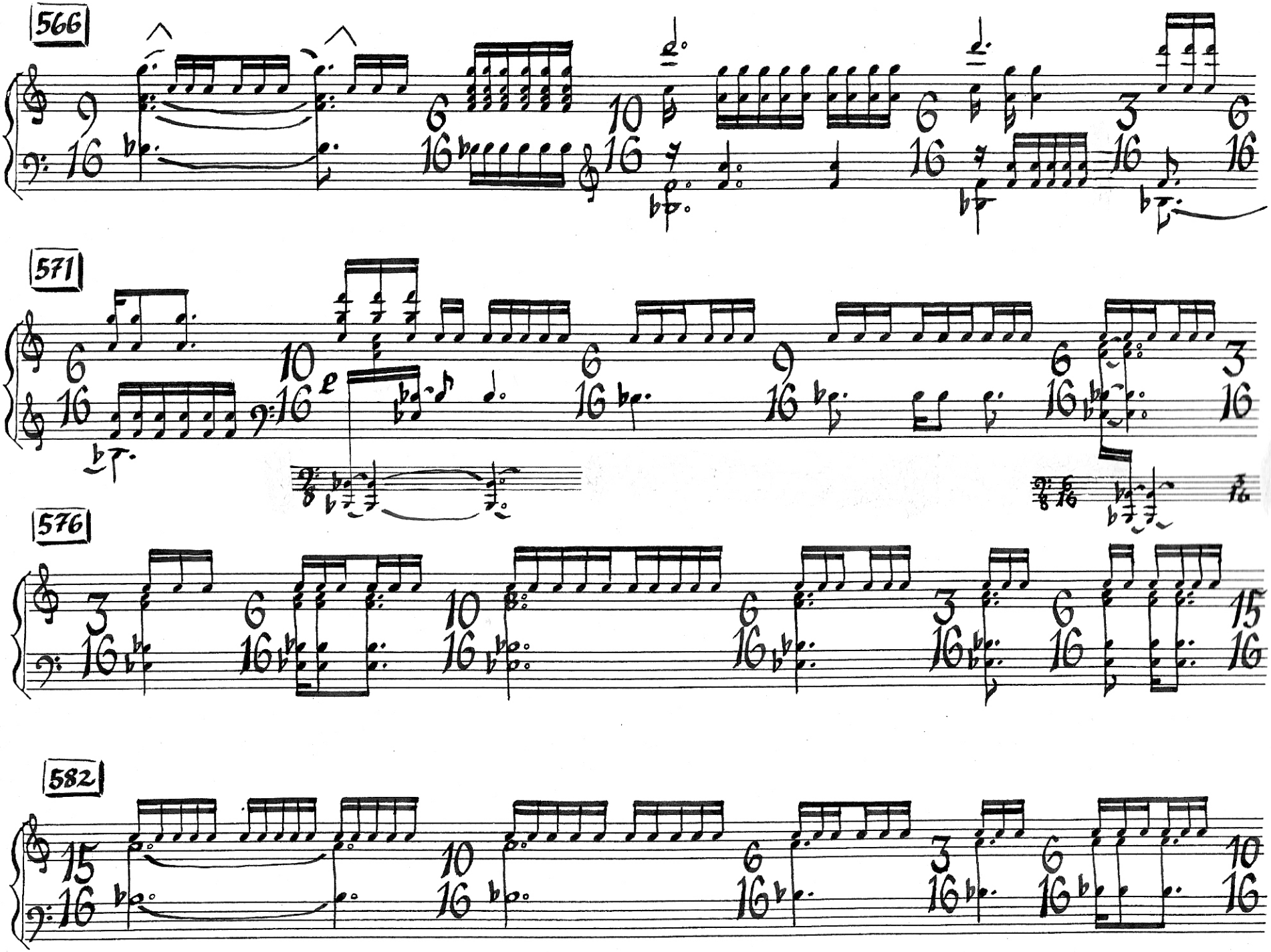


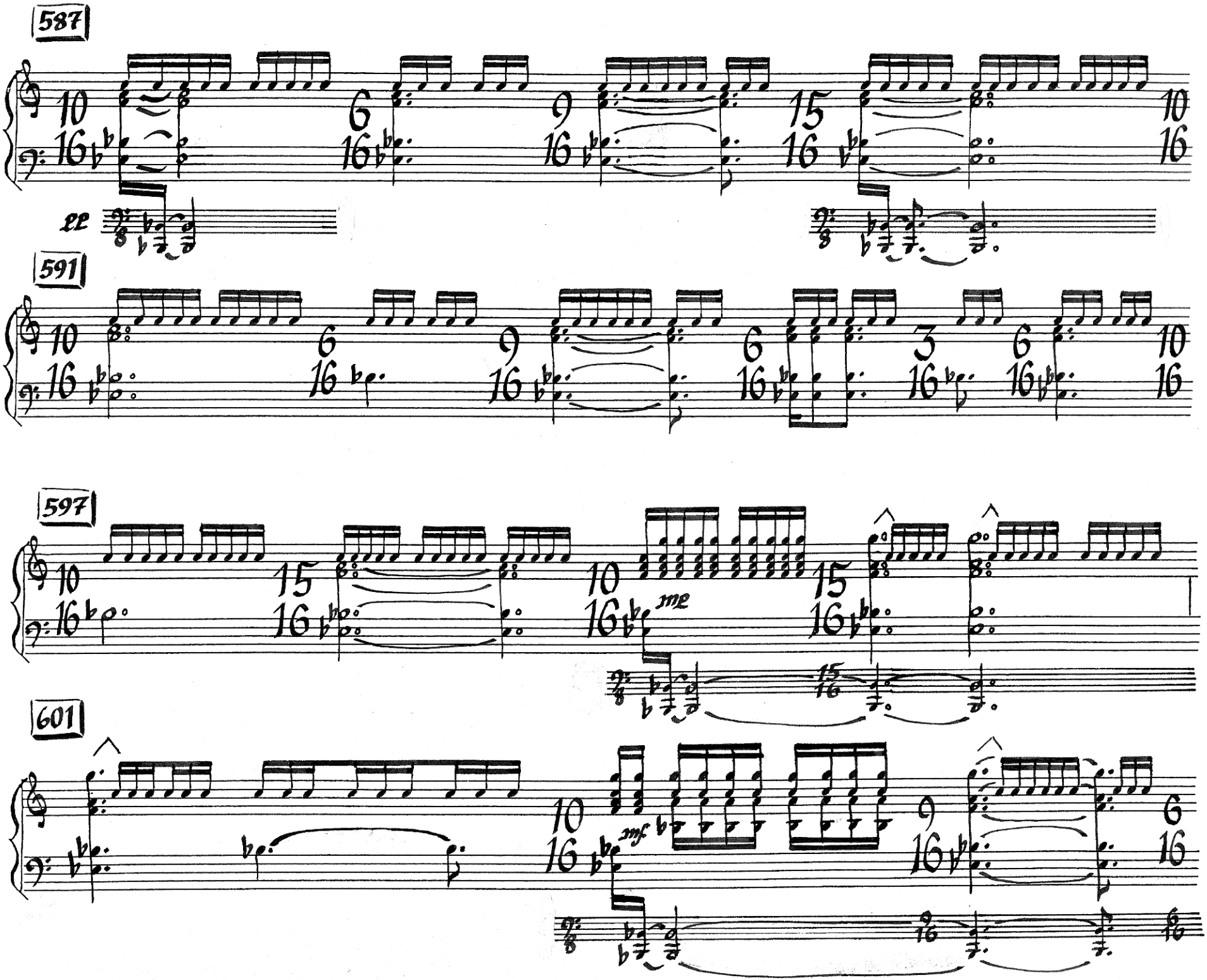

500
503
508
512

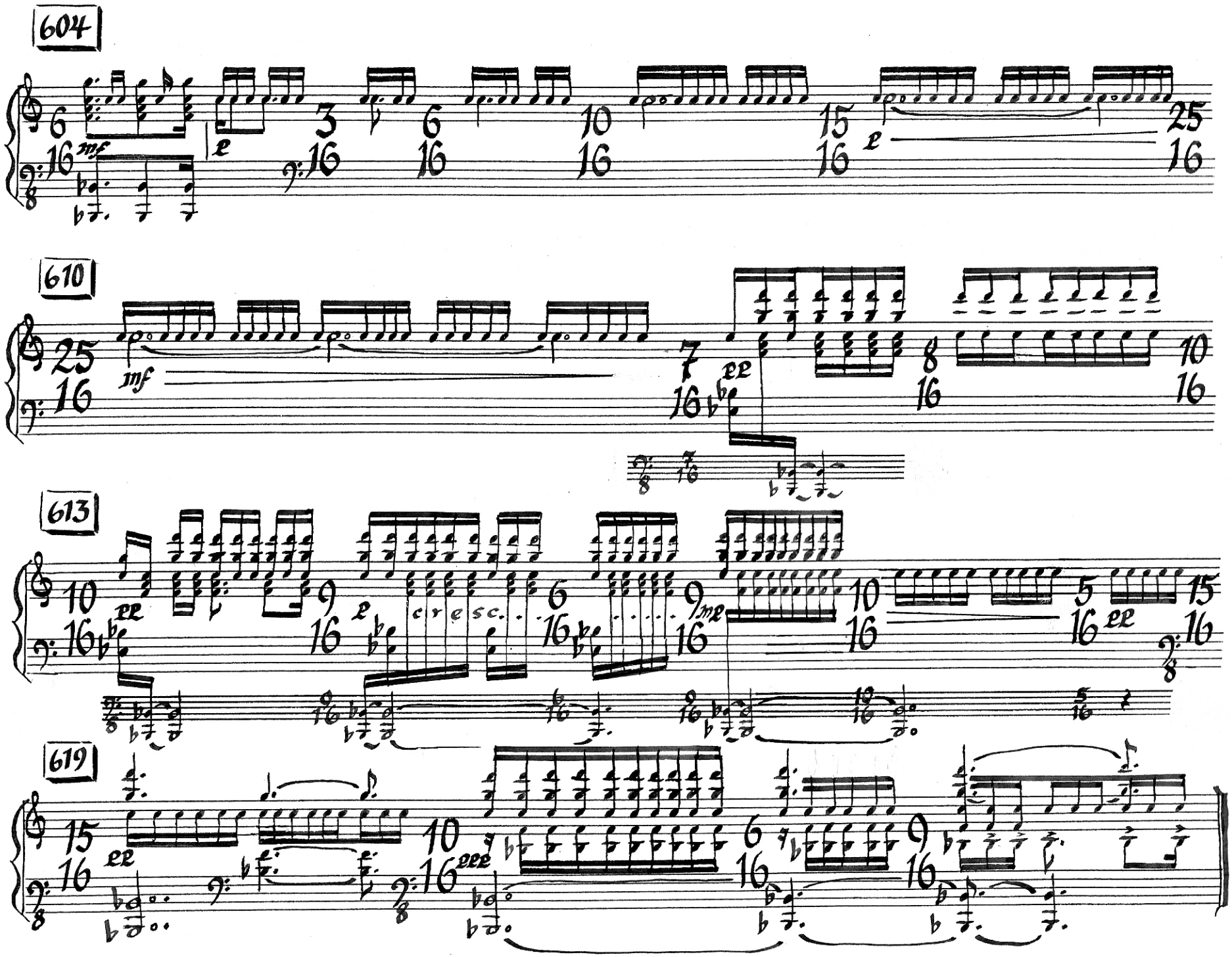

516
pp
mf
f
521
decrescendo
526


531
537
542
545
mp
ff
f
mf


550
554
mp
558
562


566
571
576
582


587
591
597
601
mp
mf


604
610
613
619
mf
pp
cresc.
mp
ppp
MAY. 87

Afterthoughts

So, it's been a little more than twenty years since I wrote SEMA: Rumi's Dance. It's clear to me now that this is my only piece where I achieved some sort of personal fusion of modernism and minimalism —a problem nagging at me since I started composing. The drama of 'opposing' musical styles (and its resolution) was a big concern to me then. Now, not so much.

Rumi is still in motion after all these years, spinning through his texts, echoing through the centuries, beyond the world of opposites, beyond culture clashes like those we are dealing with today—rich vs. poor, East vs. West, literal fanatics vs. the ocassional solitary mystic:

"Beyond that world of opposites
lies an open field—meet me there!"